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SIXTY LECTURES

ON THE SEVERAL

PORTIONS OF THE PSALMS,

AS THEY ARE APPOINTED TO BE READ IN

THE MORNING AND EVENING SERVICES

OF

The Church of England.

BY

THE REV. RICHARD BRUDENELL ✓EXTON,

DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN TO THE EARL OF CLARENDON,
AND INCUMBENT OF ATHELINGTON AND CRETINGHAM, IN THE COUNTY
OF SUFFOLK.

THOSE STRAINS THAT ONCE DID SWEET IN ZION GLIDE.—*Burns.*

LONDON:

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TO

GEORGE WILLIAM FREDERICK,

EARL OF CLARENDON, G.C.B.

THIS VOLUME IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

OF NUMEROUS SUBSTANTIAL FAVOURS CONFERRED BY HIS

NOBLE HOUSE AND BY HIMSELF,

UPON THE AUTHOR,

THROUGH A PERIOD OF MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS.

P R E F A C E .

These Lectures were commenced and continued under the hope, that with the Divine Blessing they might prove in their delivery both acceptable and profitable to the Church committed to the author's ministry: and having been spared to conclude them, he has reason for indulging a humble confidence that his labour has not been in vain in the Lord.

“An author may write a book, ostensibly to give religious instruction. But it must not be forgotten, that the very same success which accomplishes good for the cause, brings honour to the labourer: and many an enterprizing and zealous workman will find, if he looks honestly at his heart, that the worldly feeling has far more than its fair share in the work.”*

By this feeling the Author of these Lectures might have been somewhat prompted to their publication, though certainly not to their composition. But hear another cautionary monitor, neither less candid nor less modest than the one already quoted: “Omne enim artis et mentis humanæ opus habet *το ον*, ad quod, non modo licet, sed etiam aliquo modo necesse est contendere: dum in ejus studio nimius non sis, et laudem consecutionis illius nimis affectasse non videaris.”†

In venturing upon the doubtful issue of offering his work to the notice of the Christian community at large, the Author may

* *Abbott's Corner Stone.*

† *Amyraldus—Paraphrasis in Psalmos Davidis. 1662.*

have been influenced by that natural feeling common to humanity, which partially blinds us to those unavoidable imperfections that belong to all the labours of man; but which are more obvious to other eyes than to our own. Upon his own motives to the task he has undertaken, he reposes his trust of pardon with his God, for any venial errors that may have blotted his labour of love. He has designed a work equally useful to his younger ministering brethren in the pulpit, for the devotional exercises of the family circle, and for the closet of the meditative Christian. Much, however, of the good which these Lectures are designed to impart, must owe its birth to the temper and frame of mind in which they are listened to or perused. And that course which the Preacher recommended to his hearers, the Author would now suggest to his readers—the perusal, (in the Prayer Book) of the verses of each Psalm, as they are noted down, before entering on the Commentary.

The Theologian may possibly marvel at the presumed temerity of a new Commentary on the Psalms, after the labours of more learned writers, devoted exclusively to the subject: but should he extend his acquaintance with this unpretending volume, he will discover no presumptuous competition with their respective works, no rash invasion of the learned Authors' sacred territory, no secret appropriation of their patented rights. These Lectures aspire only to the merit of usefulness, as a practical guide to the better understanding and more perfect enjoyment of the spiritual character of the Psalms, than can be attained (without aid) by the generality of readers; whether in their religious services or by their own fire-side. For, as the good Bishop

Horne himself exclaims, "Is it not to be feared, that for want of such instruction, the repetition of the Psalms, as performed by multitudes, is but one degree above mechanism? And is it not a melancholy reflection, to be made at the close of a long life, that after reciting them at proper seasons, through the greatest part of it, no more should be known of their true meaning and application, than when the Psalter was first taken in hand at school?"

Wherever a borrowed passage appears, it is duly acknowledged: but it has not been thought necessary to encumber the pages with the marks of quotation [" "] to the language of Holy Writ, as often as it is interwoven with that of the Author: nor will the use of it, unacknowledged, be deemed a literary piracy. Where so much of that language is used, the marks would tend only to confuse the eye of the reader, and impart no equivalent advantage.

INTRODUCTION,

ADDRESSED TO THE CONGREGATION PRESENT AT THE
FIRST LECTURE.

It is my intention, brethren, now to commence,* and under God's blessing to continue, an Exposition of the Psalm or Psalms appointed as a part of each Sunday's Service. THE BOOK OF PSALMS is a treasury of divine instruction which has no equal among the Old Testament writings; and as a proof of the estimation in which it has ever been held, both the Jewish and the Christian Churches have, in succession and together, retained these effusions of enlightened piety in their religious services. Their great value consists in their practical character: for until the days of the Evangelists, nothing had been bequeathed to the Church of God of equal simplicity and beauty and force, with the Book of Psalms. It contains little that is mysterious, and nothing which may not be comprehended by the most unlearned, after a brief attention to its subject-matters as they arise. Our familiarity with the Psalms furnishes another reason, why I hope to impress my hearers with a fuller understanding, and a deeper interest in them, by a weekly Exposition. The result, however, I must leave to Him whose testimony is sure, and who giveth wisdom to the simple.

* Sept 7, 1845.

LECTURES ON THE PSALMS.

LECTURE I.

PSALM I.

Happiness is unquestionably the end and aim of our being. The longing after it is a part and parcel of our nature. But since that nature was defiled by the original transgression of God's law, we have gone astray from the only path which leads to the consummation so devoutly to be wished. The heathen tribes, no less than ourselves, have been, and are, in pursuit of what is deemed the chief good; but they wander on in error, while to us a light is vouchsafed, which imposes upon us a far weightier responsibility for our attainment or loss of the bliss that *is*, unquestionably, the inheritance of the undying soul. The sweet Psalmist of Israel, in his three-fold character of prophet, priest, and king, laboured in his generation to dispel the mists that darken our understanding upon this all-important subject. He penned his sublime compositions, it is true, under the imperfect light of the Legal Dispensation; but it must be remembered, that the Law was our school-master to bring us unto Christ; and the promised Messiah came, according to his own declaration, not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it. In this introductory Psalm, therefore, the sacred penman argues on the requirements of the Law, as the then only known conditions of attaining the universally desired happiness; and this happiness he sets forth under figures or similitudes, which are plain to the most uninstructed mind.

Ver. 1—4. Though all men are professedly engaged in the pursuit of happiness, the Psalmist here enumerates three distinct classes, the tendency of whose lives is at utter variance with the means, by which divine revelation and the human conscience teach us it is to be obtained. But such is the influence of these classes in the world at large, through individual contamination, that the pious Instructor of his people opens the sacred work he was now meditating, with the declaration that the highest state of blessedness we can attain to in this life is, freedom from the pollution of evil example and evil counsel.

And here are distinct descriptions of men against whom he warns us: the ungodly, the sinner, and the unbeliever, that is, the scorner. Familiarity with either of these classes is unquestionably dangerous. The ungodly man may be simply neglectful of all religious observances, while he is not chargeable with gross offences against morality, nor with the violation of human laws: but his example in the matter of an irreligious life is dangerous, and may be infectious. Again, the open and notorious sinner may be seen occasionally to appear in the House of God; may never have been heard to argue against the force and validity of God's commandments; may sometimes manifest the compunctious visitings of conscience for his deeds of darkness: but he has no restraining influence operating within him; and if he can beguile another into immoral fellowship with him, his success goes far to confirm himself in evil habits: how then can friendship or familiarity with such persons be less than dangerous? We come now to the climax of human blindness, human folly, and human madness, in the character of the infidel or scorner. We may nevertheless see an example of this suicidal class, in whom, perhaps, is not discoverable the absence of the social virtues, or the neglect of social duties: he is peradventure a kind master, a faithful husband, a fond parent, an inoffensive neighbour; and may claim perhaps, as the world goes, an average share of integrity in all his dealings with others. But seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him! And what is the damning passion of the infidel, but self-conceit? He is in his own estimation wiser than his teachers are. We are however considering the effects of his influence upon others, and the danger of too close an intimacy with him. For the immediate effects we must look into the habits of his family, his household, and those who are more remotely dependant upon him. We must look to his own movements through life, for the development of the ruling and cherished blindness

within him. Of his family we can only judge by what we do not see: we see them advancing on from childhood to manhood; but we see not any outward and visible signs of their having been brought up in the way they should go. In his dependants, whether domestic or others, we may observe a striking contrast in their observances of the Sabbath only. The Christian master, who does not profess to belong to our Church, influences his family and servants in favour of his own creed; and not being infidels, they do not, because they are gradually prejudiced against the Church, renounce all religious profession. No—they are influenced by example, perhaps by persuasion, and they become in their practice faithful professors of their particular creed. Let the same persons engage in the service of an infidel master, a scorner of the religion of the Gospel; and mark the influence of his example upon their conduct. I need not enlarge upon it. Laxity and indifference end in a total disregard of all outward observances of religion, and of inward misgivings of conscience. But let us look to the infidel himself, and the influence of his own cherished perverseness upon his own happiness only in this life. If he be a prosperous man,—and it is in this class that infidels are mostly found,—his heart is contracted to the circumference of every coin that may float within his grasp, the better to secure it from escape or flight. He has renounced the easy yoke of a Divine Master for the galling service of Mammon, the most tyrannous of all the imaginary deities of the earth; who exacts from his worshippers a seven days' service throughout every week of their lives. To his ear the Sabbath chimes bring only the remembrance of a change in his cares and labours—the permission to wander over his acres unobserved,* to calculate his probable gains or losses on the passing season, and to meditate on the effects of corn-laws upon his elastic purse, the altar of his idolatry. And it may be that he is pursuing these trou-

* These Lectures were addressed to a rural population.

blous visions under the consciousness of advancing feebleness or approaching old age ; or he may experience in every movement the pangs of some incurable malady—

Those silent pangs, that in their silence say
More to the heart than thunder to the ear:—

Though all in vain for him : his evil heart of unbelief is impenetrable alike to the warnings of nature and to the calls of grace. Yet will the example of this man have its influence on those around him. As many as share his confidence, his hospitality, or his patronage as an employer, are exposed to the danger of contamination, in proportion to the frequency or closeness of their intercourse with him. Against all these several characters the Psalmist enters his protest as dangerous persons ; and it behoves the Christian, in the discharge of his duty to his own soul, to keep aloof, as much as in him lies, from the poison of their example ; not heedlessly to walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor to stand in the way of sinners, nor to sit in the seat of the scornful :—O my soul, come not thou into their secret : unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united ! We began by speaking of human happiness, and of its universal pursuit by mankind, as the true end and aim of their being : but how diverse soever the paths in which it is sought after, there is only one straight and narrow way which leads to its certain attainment. The tree of life is in the midst of the Paradise of God. The eternal Word of Truth has guaranteed our enjoyment of its fruit. But it is still guarded by the flaming sword of the Law ; not to exclude us from entrance, but to direct us to the strait gate of admission ; while the Cherubims, the ministering spirits of the glad tidings of salvation, cease not day and night to proclaim, 'This is the way—walk ye in it ! Of these ministering spirits the inspired Psalmist belonged to the highest earthly order : and he pronounces the blessedness of the man, who shunning the contagion of "folly, vanity, and vice, and every low pursuit,"

delights himself in the Law of the Lord, therein exercising himself day and night. For his experience shall be rich in the blessings of time as well as those of eternity—that perfect state of bliss in which not even a leaf of the righteous man's verdure shall wither.

Ver. 5—7. Behold here the awful contrast: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish! The doom of the ungodly is equally sealed for time as for eternity. The just Judge of all, in his comparative estimate of his creatures, hath weighed them in the balance of his Sanctuary, and finding them deceitful upon the weights, and altogether lighter than vanity itself, He disperses them by the blasting of the breath of his displeasure; He scattereth them like chaff from the face of the earth. And when the awful trump of the Archangel shall recal the ungodly, the sinner, and the scorner, from their sleep of death, to give account of the deeds done in the body; they shall not be able to stand in the judgment, nor to lift up their heads in the presence of the righteous by whom they will be surrounded. For they are already prejudged by their own conscience; and one glance from the eye of the Omniscient Judge will pronounce the everlasting destinies of the righteous and the wicked. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

PSALM 2.

This Psalm is plainly prophetic of what would befall Christ's Church and kingdom upon the earth, and of their final triumph over the violence and treachery of heathen foes. As such, it is adopted in our Service for Easter Day. In its primary sense, a portion of it applies to the position of David, when the Philistines, on hearing that he had been anointed King of Israel, (2 *Sam.* v, 17,) became impatiently moved for his destruction. The opening of this admirable effusion of faith plainly shews that the Psalmist's mind was then under some extraordinary influence, which stirred up the prophetic spirit within him, even to embrace a far higher subject than that of his own confidence in the divine protection of himself, his throne, and his people.

Ver. 1—3. These verses are alike descriptive of the opposition of the heathen to the rule of David and that of Messiah. Furious as they were on each occasion, they imagined a vain thing, when trusting to human strength and subtlety for the overthrow of either. The one was about to be established by God's special appointment; the other had been ordained from before the foundation of the world, or ever the earth and the world were made. The kings of the earth, in their pride of place, encouraged each other in the blind presumption which was common to them all, that by their united strength they could overmaster the hosts of Omnipotence; for they could imagine no greater power than their own boasted will:—Let us! Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us! This scene was presented to David's imaginative mind, as a prelude to that divine inspiration (*afflatus Numinis*) to which he now gives utterance:—

Ver. 4—6. This is not the language of an earthly potentate, relying upon the courage and faithfulness of his people for triumph in the day of battle: but an ebullition of faith, that evidence of things not seen, which enables the believer to trample upon the objects of time and sense, and to realize the things which are afar off. David, not trusting in his own might, nor in the loyalty or warlike prowess of his subjects, seems to ridicule the threats of his enemies, in the sole confidence that God, who had so manifestly sustained him through a thousand dangers, till he had reached the throne of Israel, would still be his helper and defender. He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn: the Lord shall have them in derision. And they shall feel his wrath; they shall taste of the fruits of his displeasure; they shall know that He alone hath set a king upon his holy hill of Zion; and that by no earthly power shall his kingdom be removed. In this passage Jehovah Himself is introduced as the speaker. In what immediately follows we discern the voice of the Son of God, proclaiming that

great truth which in his own Person He preached unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel for their conviction and conversion.

Ver. 7—9. We must interpret these verses as the prophetic annunciation by David of that law, which God the Son should in due time preach to the world; and of the promise by God the Father of that universal sovereignty, which should be established in the Person of the Messiah, God manifest in the flesh. After this, the Psalmist in his own name exhorts the kings of the earth, whom he had so severely rebuked at the commencement, to reflect, and to learn, and to practise their duty, as creatures, equally with their subjects, dependant on the divine government.

Ver. 10—12. The second of these verses contains an exhortation of a similar purport with that of the Apostle to the Philippians—to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling; not recommending the abject fear which is only debasing, but the reverential feeling that may be cherished with the spirit of rejoicing, and is the evidence of holy love. For the concluding verse carries out this idea to its full extent: In eastern countries the kiss is the sign of humility from inferiors towards their superiors, and is there carried so far as to be considered an act of servile adoration. But here the Psalmist employs the term only as a figurative recommendation to the heathen people to be reconciled to the One True God and to Messiah his Son, lest He should finally and utterly cast them away; for that in the day of his anger they only shall be blessed who put their trust in Him.

PSALMS 3, 4, 5.

These three Psalms, like several others that fall in their order, are supposed to have a reference to the rebellion of Absalom, and to the suffering which that event inflicted upon his pious father. They can be considered, indeed, only as one effusion, consisting of complaint, and prayer, and expostulation, such as we find repeated in several of the subsequent Psalms. All the beauty of the composition is,

however, concentrated in the intermediate portion, the 4th Psalm—which opens with an earnestness of supplication, that seems to have been prompted by a remembrance of past deliverances:—Thou hast set me at liberty when I was in trouble: have mercy upon me, and hearken unto my prayer! His thoughts then turn to those who are persecuting him, not in the spirit of hostility, but in the utterance of mild reproof and warning, with instruction how to become righteous: reminding them of the common profession of a desire to become wise—there be many that say, Who will shew us any good? and praying in their behalf for the illumination of the Divine Spirit: and moreover confessing that he rejoiced even in their prosperity. Here, as if concluding this impressive hymn at the close of a day of trouble and rebuke, he gives his heart over to a quiet repose in that faith, which is alone the Christian's source of comfort and consolation in the hours of darkness and in the death of sleep:—I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest; for it is Thou, Lord, only that makest me dwell in safety.*

[Read Psalms 3, 4, 5.]

Glory be to the Father, &c.

* The Author is indebted to a learned Brother for having pointed out to him, that his interpretation of some of these imprecatory passages is not consonant with the grammatical construction of the original. The spirit, however, in which this interpretation was preferred, is obvious in the Lectures themselves; and the following passages from different writers on the Psalms, constitute the Author's defence, and will probably obtain the reader's toleration of a mere grammatical licence.

Psalm v, 10.—Concerning passages of this imprecatory kind in the Book of Psalms, it is to be observed that they are spoken by way of prediction rather than of imprecation; which would appear if the original verbs were translated, *as they should be*, in the future tense.—*Bp. Horne.*

Psalm xxxv, 4.—Concerning this and the like imprecations, which seem strange and severe, they may be taken only for *predictions*—*Poole.*

Psalm lxix, 32.—It may be here remarked, that this and the following verses, to the twenty-ninth inclusive, are strictly *prophetical* of the wretched condition of the Jews, after their rejection of the Messiah, and the destruction of their city and Temple.—*Travell.*

Psalm cix.—There are many passages in the Book of the Psalms, that have given offence to well-meaning persons, as savouring too much of private resentment, and inconsistent with that charity which peculiarly marks the Christian Dispensation. Many attempts have been made to remove this difficulty; but the most satisfactory method appears to be, to consider the verbs in the *future tense*, so that the passages may be looked upon as so many denunciations of the punishments that God *would* inflict on the general or individual adversaries of his Church and people.—*Wintle.* Especial care should be taken that we do not pervert this Psalm in a criminal and impious manner, by imagining we are at any time allowed to wish that the vengeance of God may fall on those who hate us, or do us hurt. David here speaks in the quality of a king chosen by God, and of a prophet: he rather *foretold* than desired the destruction of his enemies.—*Ostervald.*

LECTURE II.

PSALM 6.

This is the first of the seven Penitential Psalms, and is supposed to be a prayerful outpouring of the spirit in a time of severe sickness: and it is a composition peculiarly fitted for use on all such occasions. Like every other portion of the Holy Scriptures, it has been preserved for our learning; for though we all are liable to the visitations of disease, we are not all equally capable of expressing our thoughts and desires in prayer, while labouring under the pains that flesh is heir to. For every help, therefore, in this extremity, our thanksgivings are due to the Author of all good: for from hence we may derive patience and comfort in his Holy Word; since, as in the midst of life we are in death, so in the hour of death we may embrace and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life.

Ver. 1—4. In this short Psalm are exhibited very naturally the three several positions which the afflicted spirit may be supposed most prone to take up in its hour of trial—prayer, complaint, and returning confidence. It is not always that prayer takes the lead in our thoughts, when the body is sustaining the penalties of its inherited corruption: but this is for want of due reflection on the only source of hope and consolation. The great Physician of our souls is frequently urged, so to speak, to the necessity of making us sensible of his healing powers, by inflicting those pains on our mortal frames, through which alone we can be brought to reflect upon the more enduring agonies that await the thoughtless, unawakened, unregenerate soul. We can bear every torture of the mind, every change of fortune, every kind of bitter experience which the world can impose upon us; and may never think of imploring the divine protection and deliverance; by reason that our thoughts are bent upon the immediate cause of our suffering, whether that be our own imprudence or the enmity of others. But on the bed of sickness, when hope is departing, and the shadow of death seems to be stealing upon our dis-

ordered vision, we are constrained to admit, that our wounds and bruises and putrifying sores are the effects of a chastening inflicted by an Almighty hand. The spirit of prayer is necessarily awakened, not by love but by fear: Lord, rebuke me not in thine indignation! chasten me not in thy displeasure! The consciousness of mere inability to sustain the assaults of the strong man armed, produces a kind of desperate hope in the possibility of some healing power, equally above our knowledge as beyond our reach, except by imploring the aid of Him, whom until now, we have shut out, willfully and rebelliously shut out, from all our thoughts. Our very feebleness then proves a stimulus to the growing strength of the reluctant will; and if we implore not the pardon of our sins, yet can we imprecate God's compassion on our sufferings:—Have mercy upon me, Lord, for I am weak: O Lord heal me, for my bones are vexed! If this be but the first step towards a more fervent and effectual prayer, it is not to be despised as a prelude to awakening grace. The dread of the soul's suffering cannot be wholly shut out from the reflections of the sinner, whose bodily pangs enforce the apprehensions of increasing decay and approaching death. The immensity of the stake at issue overpowers even the love of life, which is always strongest in the hour of danger, and urges the slow repugnant prayer for mercy and pardon:—My soul also is sore troubled: but, Lord, how long wilt thou punish me? Shall thy fiery wrath for ever be suspended over my guilty spirit? Are thy terrors awakened for eternity, when the tortures of this decaying flesh shall no longer be my portion here? Turn Thee, O Lord, and deliver my soul! O save me for thy-mercy's sake!

Ver. 5—7. The great Apostle hath exhorted us to glorify God in the body, and in the spirit, which are God's. The inference to be drawn from the Psalmist's argument here, is also to the same effect. In death no man remembereth Thee; and who will give Thee thanks in the pit?—an apostrophe which is

finely enlarged by one of our best Commentators :*—" God created man for his own glory; which, therefore, would be so far diminished, if man were permitted finally to perish. The body could not glorify God, unless raised from the dead; nor could the soul, if left in hell. The voice of thanksgiving is not heard in the grave—no hallelujahs are sung in the pit of destruction." Here we may sanctify our complainings with prayer; for we are not forbidden to complain, either by any written precept or by the example of our Divine Instructor; who on the cross gave vent to those feelings, which belong to the nature He was then sustaining:—My God, my God! why hast Thou forsaken Me? Even so the pious king of Israel mingles with his devotions the cries of nature:—I am weary of groaning; my beauty is gone for very trouble. Yet in the midst of his anguish he looks around him upon the worthlessness in his extremity of all those things that minister to the pride, pomp, and circumstance of his elevated rank; and records his condemnation of them in the spirit of those words which our great poet puts into the mouth of one of his high characters: Vain pomp and glory of the world, I hate you! The words of David are—

Ver. 8—10. The time will arrive, when if we can cherish the faithful confidence of the Psalmist, we shall share with him the wisdom that owns the emptiness of those things, which in times of health, and peace, and prosperity, feed the vanity of the human heart; and beguile it from the only objects worthy of its contemplation and its love: the hour when, in the conviction of our humbled souls, we shall so earnestly, so hopefully, so confidently have committed ourselves to the tender mercies of our God in Christ Jesus, as to feel the assurance, that the Lord hath heard the voice of our weeping; that He hath heard our petition; that He will receive our prayer. Then may we exultingly cherish the belief in our final deliverance from the power of our enemies, spiritual and temporal; that they shall be

* Bp. Horne.

utterly confounded and sore vexed at the salvation wrought in our behalf; that they shall be turned back with sudden shame, to seek some other subjects for the victims of their disappointed malice.

PSALM 7.

This is a Psalm or Hymn, said to have been written by David as a record of his own innocency, when he had been slandered by some one among the envious dependants of Saul. The nature of the imputation brought against him does not appear; but there is sufficient evidence of the consciousness of his own integrity; while he appeals only to the Searcher of hearts, for righteous judgment of his conduct in the particular matter referred to.

Ver. 1—2. The preacher hath declared that a good name is better than precious ointment: and it may be as truly affirmed, that of still greater value is the testimony of conscience, that we deserve not an ill name. This alone will bear us up against many trials and conflicts with an evil world: but if it enable us also to cast our care upon Him who careth for us under every variety of tribulation; if we can lay our hearts open in prayer to the God of all consolation—O Lord my God, in Thee have I put my trust;—then may we be assured of protection and deliverance from the power of all who would persecute us, in the indulgence of their envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness. For though like lions they may threaten to devour our soul, and tear it in pieces, in the foolish confidence that there is none to interpose in behalf of the poor persecuted child of the dust; none to help him in his worst extremity; they shall find their malicious intentions foiled by an unseen Power, who watcheth over the safety of his own faithful servants, and will not that the righteous be cast down. And who is the righteous man, but he that can thus boldly appeal to the God of the spirits of all flesh?

Ver. 3—5. It is often seen, and felt too, by one who is suffering under the malignant slander of an enemy, that it is of little use to assert his innocence, or even to produce proofs of it, in the presence of his fellow-men; relying upon their justice, their honesty, their love of truth, or their presumed friendship: he is building his place of refuge on the sand. The cold and silent glance of worthless pity will often prove the utmost mite they have to bestow, for the restoration of his injured character, and the re-establishment of his peace. Happy is he, therefore, who taking refuge in the strong-hold of his own conscience, can look out from thence to the throne of Divine Justice; and there pleading his own cause, can lay open his inmost thoughts and desires, to the eye of Him who judgeth righteously:—O Lord my God, if I have done any such thing: or if there be in my hands the wickedness that is laid to my charge; then let mine enemy persecute my soul, and take me: yea, let him tread my life down upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust! Here is the language that admits of no mistake—the impressive testimony of inward rectitude, the boldness of conscious integrity, “which gives the world assurance of a man.” The persecutions of Saul were for a length of time a sore burthen on the mind of the innocent son of Jesse; but they tempted him not to revenge, at the expense of his religious principle; for we read in the first book of Samuel, that when Saul with three thousand men was in pursuit of David in the wilderness of En-gedi, the malicious king had occasion to retire into the very cave where David had hid himself; and that there he availed himself of the opportunity of cutting off the skirt of Saul’s robe, which he afterwards shewed to him, as a proof that his fidelity was unshaken. See, my father; yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee: yet *thou* huntest *my* soul to take it! To this occurrence the sacred

writer alludes in the 4th verse of the Psalm—Yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy.

Ver. 6—9. This passage is a prayer for the divine judgments upon the general wickedness of the subjects of Saul, rather than against his personal share of it: for it had followed of course, that very many of the people besides those who formed his army, would take part with their sovereign against one whom he would have dealt with (however unjustly) as an enemy and a traitor. David therefore calls upon the Lord to manifest himself in his favour, to stand up in wrath, and to rise up in judgment against them: and that for the sake of the nation at large, God's justice between David and his enemies might be made plain in their sight; that they, the people, may no longer remain in doubt of his righteousness, or integrity; and that his innocency might be proved in the sight of all men: so that the wickedness of the ungodly may cease, from their conviction of his upright conduct; and that those who cherish the principles of truth and justice, may be guided by the divine counsels in their judgment of his conduct.

Ver. 10—17. Here follow some general reflections upon the divine government of the world, as displayed in God's dealings with the righteous and the wicked; setting forth some of the leading attributes of the character of the Deity; as his omniscience, proved in trying the very hearts and reins of man; his watchful care for the preservation of them that are true of heart; his strength to punish, contrasted with his patience in forbearing to punish, the provocations of the wicked; and his awful judgments, prepared for those who will not turn from their evil ways; against whom He is represented as having whet his sword, and bent his bow, and ordained his arrows, as the weapons of his vengeance and the instruments of their destruction. Then follows the description of the certain fate of those who will, in spite of warnings, threatenings, and conditional promises of mercy, go on still in their wickedness, con-

ceiving sorrow and bringing forth ungodliness; until the pit which they had digged for others shall prove to themselves a pit of destruction; and the fruits of their wickedness crush the heads that had conceived it. Wherefore the upright victim of their persecution concludes, I will give thanks unto the Lord according to his righteousness, and I will praise the Name of the Lord Most High.

P S A L M 8.

This and the following Psalm are supposed to commemorate David's wonderful victory over the giant of Gath. The first, which we are now entering upon, forms a part of the service of our Church on the Anniversary of Christ's Ascension; and by her is no doubt considered as figuratively applicable to the great exaltation which was vouchsafed to human nature, by its having been taken as the garment of the Son of God, until by his Ascension the great mission of mercy was fulfilled, and ratified in the sight of men and angels: after the noblest victory ever won upon the earth.

Ver. 1—9. The History of David's encounter with Goliath is well known; but is too little considered, perhaps, to produce those reflections which it is so well calculated to awaken. Here is a stripling who was employed in keeping his father's sheep, at a time of war between the Israelites and Philistines, in which his three eldest brethren were then engaged. He was sent to the camp by his father to carry provisions to them, and to enquire after their welfare. He saw the two hostile armies in battle array against each other, on two opposite mountains. He learned that the cowardly enemies of his country had rested their sole hope of victory on the prowess and strength of a single man: but that man was a giant, nine feet in height, and armed with a coat of mail, the weight of which alone proved his prodigious strength; for it was more than 140 pounds; while the iron head, only, of his spear, weighed 17 pounds, besides the helmet of brass on his head. This bugbear of

infidel blindness was put forward every morning in front of the hostile ranks to defy the armies of Israel, and to bully them into submission; by calling upon them to produce a man that they might fight together, and thus to decide who should be the future masters and who the servants of either party. And the effect of their boasting challenge was, that Saul and all Israel were dismayed and greatly afraid. But the truth must be allowed, that the people of Israel were then only in the infancy of their progress towards the knowledge of the One True God; notwithstanding their past, and it should seem, their forgotten experience of his often manifested Omnipotence in their behalf. Here, however, for almost the first time upon record, God worked by the agency of a single human instrument, and one who was until then held in contempt even by his own kindred: for Eliab his brother thus reproached him—I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart: for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle. David's heart, however, was occupied by inspired thoughts which his brother could not divine. The Lord had delivered him out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear; and the remembrance of this gave him confidence that under the divine guidance, the simple skill of the shepherd boy, with the sling and the stone, would deliver himself and his country from the power of the brute giant and his cowardly followers. None who hear me can be ignorant of the issue of this seemingly unequal contest. Nor was it likely ever to be absent from the memory of the grateful son of Jesse. This Psalm is a most pious, poetical, and dignified commemoration of the great event, written many years after: and it is remarkable that the only allusion which he modestly makes to himself, was quoted by our Saviour, in reproof of the Chief Priests and Scribes—Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE III.

PSALM 9.

There exists some diversity of opinion among commentators touching the occasion upon which this Psalm was written ; a few supposing this and the 8th commemorative of David's victory over Goliah : but there is no particular application to that event in either to warrant this conclusion ; nevertheless, in deference to an opinion held by learned men, I have treated the first of the two Psalms with an exclusive view to that impressive subject of sacred history. This 9th Psalm, though it may include a retrospective view of his encounter with Goliah, is a solemn and grateful testimonial of thankfulness for the many proofs which David had experienced of the Divine Providence and Benevolence, in his deliverance from imminent perils.

Ver. 1—6. The warmth and earnestness of spirit with which the Psalmist enters upon this act of thanksgiving, indicates the soundness of the faith and the depth of the gratitude which prompted it. The rapid transition of the thoughts arising in the mind of the poet savours also of the force of inspiration : and indeed the entire Book of Psalms is of that character, which justifies the universal belief that David, among other holy men, wrote and spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. Whatever were the circumstances here commemorated, whether his individual achievement against the giant of Gath, or other triumphs obtained by the forces he commanded, the Psalmist gives the entire glory to God ; and the very terms of thanksgiving used by him testify to the sincerity of his oblation :—I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart : I will speak of all thy marvellous works : I will be glad and rejoice in Thee : yea, my songs will I make of thy Name, O Thou most Highest ! From the throne whereon thou sittest hath thy righteous judgment maintained my cause, to the destruction of Israel's ungodly foes ; for by thy power they are rebuked, they are fallen and driven back, they perish and are destroyed ; and even as their own cities which have been swept

away in thy just anger, the memorial of their wicked inhabitants is perished with them: Thou hast put out their name for ever and ever! O thou enemy, (thy) destructions are come to a perpetual end. These concluding words are parenthetical where they stand; but at the close of this passage, they form the climax to a noble effusion of devotional praise.

Ver. 7—12. Here follows an earnest exhortation to the people, which seems to flow spontaneously from David's own reflection on the Power and Goodness displayed in their behalf, by the God of their salvation; whose claim to their submission and confidence, the Psalmist traces to the unchanging character of *His* Majesty: for not only doth He reign supreme from all eternity, but hath also prepared his seat for the judgment of the actions of all mankind, in that day which He hath Himself appointed, when He shall judge the world in righteousness. And it was in these very words that Paul reprov'd the blindness of the Athenians, when he discovered them offering their devotions at an altar inscribed *To the Unknown God*. (*Acts xxvi.*) The Psalmist, however, instructs his people to put their trust in the Lord for temporal justice, for protection, for support, and for safety in time of trouble. He had enjoyed a prolonged experience of the loving-kindness of the Lord, and as the well-being of his people was bound up in his own prosperity, he labours to impress their hearts with the same sentiments of faith and devotedness to the God of Zion, which animated his own. He exhorts them therefore to put their full trust in the Lord; to shew the people, that is, to speak continually among each other, of his doings; reminding them that the Lord forgetteth not the complaint of the oppressed and the poor; for that the day will come, wherein He will make inquiry for the blood of those who have been unrighteously slain, or cruelly treated, or unjustly impoverished, by the tyranny of heathen or ungodly men; never, in time nor in eternity, failing them who seek his face.

Ver. 13—20. In his contemplation of the dangers and deliverances of his people, the pious king of Israel never omits the duty of personal prayer. The experience and fate of Israel were so interwoven with his own, that he could not separate them in his thoughts. He could not forget, moreover, that in all the national conflicts wherein his people had been engaged, his individual destruction was the first and chief aim of his foes, whether they were the heathen nations around him, or the treacherous instruments of Saul's vengeance, or his own rebellious subjects. Here therefore he resumes the language of private prayer—he supplicates the Almighty to have mercy especially upon himself, and to consider his personal affliction; acknowledging with a grateful spirit, that the Lord alone had redeemed his life from many past perils, and lifted him up from the gates of death: and upon this review he builds his hope that he shall yet rejoice in the final salvation of his God, and be spared to celebrate his praises in the presence of all Israel, and within the gates of the daughter of Zion: for that he had already been made to triumph over his godless adversaries: they had fallen into the pit of their own contrivance; they had been caught in the snares which they had privily laid for his destruction. In the meditation and prayer which conclude this Psalm, though ostensibly applied to the temporal enemies of Israel, the Christian may see an instructive model whereby to shape his own thoughts, and supplications for aid, against his spiritual foes, sin, the world, and the devil. Nor can he fail, while meditating on this portion of the Psalm, to turn the mind's eye upon those living professors of the religion of the Gospel, whose wishes and actions are nevertheless hostile to the peace and unity of Christ's Holy Catholic Church; whom the Apostle describes as gainsayers, who while they profess that they know God, in works deny Him; being in truth vain talkers and deceivers, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. (*Tit.* i.) To all such is David's supplica-

tion most appropriate—Put them in fear, O Lord, that they may know themselves to be but men.

PSALM 10.

Whatever was the occasion which prompted the composing of this Psalm, it must remain unknown, as it bears no Title in the original. It is, however, an eloquent exposure of those evil practices which godless men indulge in, to manifest their enmity against their more virtuous neighbours; which is followed by a most earnest appeal to God in behalf of those who are his faithful though oppressed servants. The Psalm contains moreover many useful though indirect instructions, by which the humble Christian is encouraged to preserve an unshaken faith in the defence of the Most High, under whatever provocations he may sustain from evil tongues. Here is nothing of a prophetic character, no figurative language, but all is simply descriptive and instructive.

Ver. 1—6. The leading verse of this Psalm is thought to be a reflection arising out of the remembrance of the argument of Moses, in his exhortation to obedience, in the 4th chapter of Deuteronomy:—What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is, in all things that we call upon him for? Whereas the Psalmist's complaint is, Why standest Thou so far off, O Lord, and hidest thy face in the needful time of trouble? Yet this betrays more of mere human impatience under the provocation of the wicked, than of decided faithlessness. The persecution and the proud boastings of ungodliness, and the arrogant defiance of the infidel, unchecked for a season, are strong temptations to the weakness of our nature to admit, upon occasions, the suggestions of a doubting spirit. Yet these are but the flitting shadows cast upon our vision by our ever-present infirmities. The Psalmist was too deeply convinced how abhorrent in the sight of God is the pride of infidelity, to doubt for a moment of the final administration of retributive justice; but is impatient of its delay, while witnessing the impious boldness of the offenders:—Tush,

I shall never be cast down : there shall no harm happen unto me ! This portion of the Psalm gives a general description of the subjects of complaint : what follows is more minute and particular.

Ver. 7—12. The vehemence of the language resorted to by the Psalmist in these descriptive passages, indicates the presence of some extraordinary cause : it is surmised that the various stratagems resorted to by the emissaries of Saul, to circumvent the innocent object of his implacable malice, sometimes successfully against the most simple among David's faithful followers, called forth these vituperative sentences : and it is not improbable that the indignant feelings of the honest son of Jesse were aroused to their utmost height, by hearing from time to time that the infidel plea which he has recorded, was the familiar language of his enemies :—Tush, God hath forgotten : He hideth away his face, and He will never see it ! As this was their only hope of impunity, so was David's confidence in the never-failing protection of Jehovah offended ; his pride was wounded ; and in his estimate of the true character of his foes, he feels no reserve in giving to its several features their proper colouring. He knew them only as blasphemers, deceivers, and traitors ; (See 1 *Sam.* xviii, 22, &c.) that their treachery was but the implement used to gratify their murderous designs against the innocent ; and that they rested their hope of final success against himself and his little company of friends, upon *their* comparative weakness and poverty. The contemplation of their wickedness seems to have left the sacred historian powerless to restrain his pen from recording even one dark line in the description of their complicated baseness. Thus does the Psalmist exemplify our Lord's declaration—He that is faithful in that which is the least is faithful also in much. David has rendered justice to his enemies, by preserving their true characters for the instruction and caution of posterity.

Ver. 13—20. Against the wickedness which he has so minutely recorded, the Psalmist raises his supplication in behalf of the afflicted victims of that wickedness, with an earnestness scarcely less vehement than that which he had manifested in his condemnation of the ungodly persecutors. Such will ever be the quality of the prayer of faith, when prompted by a due estimate of the impartiality of Divine justice. Earnestness in prayer is the test of the sincerity of faith. The very terms of David's supplication afford the proof of his confidence that his prayer would not return unto him void of effect. Arise, O Lord God! lift up thine hand: forget not the poor. The blasphemy of the wicked hath reached thine ears; thine eyes have beheld the prevailing ungodliness and wrong; the poor committeth his sorrows unto Thee; the friendless seek refuge under thy wing, as their helper and defender. Interpose, O God, between them and their oppressors: break down the power of the ungodly and malicious: for when that is destroyed, Thou shalt find faithfulness, only, among thy people. The sudden transition, from this imprecation to the warm language of devout acknowledgment, is the evidence of an answered prayer: it is the confession of God's omnipotence, timely manifested in behalf of his oppressed people: it is the pledge of increasing faith in the loving-kindness of the Lord towards them that call upon Him, yea, all such as call upon Him faithfully: it is the avowal that of Him alone cometh that preparation of the heart, which gives its prayer a claim to the ear of divine compassion. To meet this view of the purport of the Psalmist's language, it is necessary to make only a little change in the arrangement of the three concluding verses:—Lord, Thou hast heard the desire of the poor: Thou preparest their heart, and (then) thine ear hearkeneth thereto; to the end that Thou mayest help the fatherless and poor unto their right, (and) that the man of the earth be no more exalted against them: for already are the heathen perished out of the land; because Thou, Lord, art King for ever and ever.

PSALM 11.

This short Psalm is a poetical commemoration of the most pregnant circumstance of David's eventful life. While he was in the house of Saul, retained as a minstrel, and exercising his skill on the harp for the solace of his master's troubled spirit, it became manifest to all the king's household that the young son of Jesse had become an object of peculiar hatred to Saul's disordered mind; and they advised him to provide for his own safety by fleeing into the mountainous country of Judea. David did not follow this counsel, for it was after this that he achieved his wondrous victory over the Philistine host by the slaughter of Goliath. At length his beloved friend Jonathan persuaded him of the necessity of avoiding Saul's increasing madness against him. This Psalm is a record of David's feelings and reflections at that trying period; and if composed at the time, is an evidence of the early display of that fine talent, to which every succeeding generation owes so great a debt, for its instruction in the soundest piety.

Ver. 1—3. These three verses are interlocutory, and we must suppose David and Jonathan to be the speakers; for the language of the response is bolder and more faithful, than any we can suppose to have been uttered by a servant in Saul's household. The opening passage is strikingly energetic: it savours of youthful ardour, breaking forth in a sudden flame of astonishment; at the same time expressive of an impassible confidence in the divine protection, and of the strong consciousness of integrity. In the Lord put I my trust! Am I not his anointed future King of Israel? Am I a traitor in the house of Saul? Am I intriguing to forestal the decrees of Jehovah, by supplanting the Lord's chosen servant? Am I not faithful to my calling in his household, and diligently labouring by my humble talent to soothe the distracted mind of my acknowledged master? Wherefore then should I fear? Is the Lord's hand shortened, that it cannot save? How say ye then to my soul that she should flee, as a bird unto the hill? The reply of his friend is at once faithful, judicious, and precise:—Beware; for lo, the ungodly bend their bow against thy life; they make ready their arrows within the quiver, that they may privily destroy thee; and that, because thou art true of heart: for within my father's house there is neither harmony, nor discipline, nor order: his throne is shaken, and its very foun-

dations will be cast down. And what hath the righteous done? Wherein hath my beloved friend David offended, that he should be swallowed up in the impending destruction? Why should he, the innocent cause of all this disorder, remain to become the certain victim of my father's madness and the malice of his servants? "And, as touching the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the Lord be between thee and me for ever!" (1 *Sam.* xx, 23.)

Ver. 4—8. The sequel of this dialogue, contained in David's reply, denotes an unshaken faith in the protection of his God; for though constrained to follow the advice of his constant friend, he enters upon his perilous flight with the fullest trust in his future and final deliverance. His thoughts ascend to the dwelling-place of the Most High: there he sees the Judge of all the earth, the Diviner of the thoughts of men's hearts, the impartial Rewarder of all their doings, sitting on the judgment seat in his holy Temple, pondering the ways of men, compassionating the meek and lowly, protecting the poor and oppressed, and treasuring up his wrath against the day of wrath, for the just punishment of every soul of man that doeth evil. For though, according to the apostolical doctrine, whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth; though he trieth the righteous, (which is the more expressive term than "alloweth" of our Bible translation,) because He loveth righteousness, and condescends to regard the actions of the just; yet doth He so abhor the ungodly, and him that delighteth in wickedness, that oftimes He leaveth all such unnoticed, unrestrained, unpunished throughout this life; so that they come in no misfortune like other folk, neither are they plagued like other men. But the day will come, in the which He shall judge the world in righteousness; and when upon the ungodly He shall rain snares, and fire, and brimstone, storm and tempest: this shall be their portion: they shall be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation: they shall even drink it and

suck it out! (*Ezekiel* xxiii, 33.) With this view of the righteous retribution of the Most High God, the youthful son of Jesse, the type of the true David our Lord and Redeemer, goeth forth conquering and to conquer; and amid all the dark uncertainties and perils surrounding his unknown path, relying upon the protection of Him who maketh sore and bindeth up; whose spirit strengthened his servant with the whispered promise—I will deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven shall no evil touch thee. Thus out of weakness was David made strong. (*Heb.* xi, 34.) In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye then to my soul, that she should flee as a bird unto the hill?

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE IV.

PSALM 12.

In this Psalm the Priest and Prophet of Israel laments the general corruption of the time, under which the Church of God was suffering, and bewailing the impediments of her glory and usefulness on earth. But she is encouraged to look to the divine promises, and, thereupon to rest her faith; though the wicked prevail over her for a season, and walk on in their course, without present check or chastisement.

Ver. 1—2. It is not only by the practical infidel, or the open profligate, that the cause of Christ's Kingdom upon earth is hindered in its progress towards universal rule; but the hypocritical professor, the wise in his own conceit, and the schismatic, alike impede the spread of the knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus. These have each their private ends to serve, their carnal prejudices, and their worldly advantages; and to these ends they direct all their energies, their opportunities, and their influence; beguiling unstable souls by their vain and self-magnifying talk; flattering with their lips those whom they would betray into their net; dissembling in their double heart the plainest and most obvious truths of the written Word, that they might exalt themselves and their unrighteous cause, in the sight of those whom they hope to win over to their own delusive practices. And thereby many fall unto them unawares, and thereout suck they no small advantage. Such is the working of Popery in all its variety of means: such are the labours of Schism in its manifold denominations. Here, my brethren, ye have not so learned Christ. It is not the practice of our Church to rely upon flattery, or dissimulation, or human tyranny: knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men; not by the dissembling arguments of fleshly wisdom, nor by deceitfully handling the Word of Truth; but in simplicity and

godly sincerity, beseeching you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain—that is, the means of grace, which it is the duty of God's ordained ministry, however unworthy we be of the sacred trust, to dispense faithfully, fearlessly, and independently of the gainsayer or the scoffer. Some of you, my brethren, are in subjection occasionally to the false teaching of the apostles of schism: but once and again I warn you to beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Be not carried away with every wind of doctrine whereby they lie in wait to deceive. Have a due regard to your soul's health, if you are careless of your little wealth; and some of you know to your cost that the fellowship, or as it is called, the "membership" of schism, is an imaginary *honour* not to be maintained for nothing. But hear now the Psalmist's condemnation of the leaders in this mystery of iniquity; and mark how truly he describes them and their doings.

Ver. 3—4. And let me remind you, brethren, that a rebellious pride is the moving principle in all dissent. It was that spirit which Satan infused into the hearts of Korah and all his company, when they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron; insolently demanding of them, the specially appointed servants of Jehovah, wherefore lift ye up yourselves above the congregation? And observe how nearly alike is the language which the Psalmist attributes to the gainsayers in his day—We are they that ought to speak: who is Lord over us? And let me further remind you, that this is the very spirit of pride which prompts and upholds the schismatic in every successive generation of men. But it was our Saviour's declaration of Himself, I came not to send peace on earth; but a sword: and his true disciples need not to act the part of cowards in their Christian warfare; for they may ever depend upon the help of the Lord against the mighty; for He will root these out at the last. A humble spirit, receiving with meekness the ingrafted Word, is the strongest armour against spiritual delusion and all its evil works. For the words of the Saviour are,

Except ye receive the kingdom of God as little children, ye shall not enter therein.

Ver. 5—6. Bearing in mind that all which is said in this Psalm applies to the true Church of God collectively, we here come to the consolation offered to those who can so far lift their minds above the grovelling pursuits of this world, as to take an interest in the well-being of the Christian community. The poor in spirit are the blessed of our Heavenly Redeemer, and these are they of whom the Psalmist speaks as the needy: and for their deep sighing, and for their comfortless troubles' sake, he assures us that the Lord will arise, and will help them in their necessities, and against their fears. I have no very strong hope, my brethren, that among those who now hear me, there is any prevailing sense of the value of an established Church in our land. I fear that for want of the knowledge that this is the foundation, and the source, and the security of all our national blessings, there exists a cold indifference in the hearts of the majority, not only to her welfare and supremacy, but to her very existence. But what *is* the Church? It is the visible representative on earth of the crucified and risen Redeemer. It is his mystical body, and we are all members thereof, whether healthful or diseased, whether sound or lame, whether useful or cumbrous, whether graceful or unsightly—for such are the true distinctions between the faithful and the unfaithful professors of the religion of the Gospel. But here, in this Psalm, the faithful are assured of the divine support and protection—I will up, saith the Lord; and will help every one from him that swelleth against him, and will set him at rest. Let him who can derive consolation from the reflection that he is a true member of Christ's Holy Catholic Church upon earth—let him assure himself, that this instrument of his eternal salvation will not be removed from his path, will not be cast aside to gratify the rebellious spirit of our enemies. For this is the promise of its Founder and Protector. Lo, I am with you to the end of the world!

Ver. 7—9. Well may the Church confide and rejoice in the divine promises. They have been tried through a period of 1800 years of continual warfare with her open foes and her treacherous professors of friendship. And more obviously here in this favoured land, where the idolatry of Popery, the scoffs of the infidel, and the hypocrisy of the Puritan, have in turns and together assailed the bulwarks of our Zion. But her foundations are upon the holy hills, and the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. These pure words are unchangeable; and the Lord will keep them, and by them he will preserve his faithful followers from every evil generation. It must needs be that offences come; for the ungodly portion of the human race will ever be seen to walk on every side: they will have their short turns of exaltation and triumph, and will occasionally, under the permitted power of Satan, put to rebuke the children of men. But these shall be finally delivered, and shall go forth, like the martyrs and confessors of old, purified in the furnace of affliction, pure as the silver which is tried and purified seven times in the fire; and bearing their testimony to the truth of the divine promises before men and angels, through the vast circle of eternity. For the righteous live for evermore: their reward also is with the Lord, and the care of them with the Most High. They shall receive a glorious kingdom, and a beautiful crown from the Lord's hand: for with his right hand shall he cover them, and with his arm shall he protect them. Then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his labours. Thus the righteous which is dead shall condemn the ungodly which are living.

PSALM 13.

Here again is an outpouring of complaint, and prayer, and faith in the protecting shield of God's Providence: and a suitable act of praise for mercies relied upon, though yet afar off: an anticipation of desired blessing by the thanksgiving that it shall inspire.

Ver. 1—2. In this complaint there is something so natural, so congenial to our common feelings, under the sense of ill treatment, that every believer in an all-ruling Providence must have experienced it at some time or other in his life. It is true that men are too apt to cherish resentment, and to seek revenge for injuries, and to trust in their own opportunity and strength to punish the offender against their peace. But this practice is not in accordance with the precepts of Christianity; nor is it an evidence of a religious faith and trust in the care of our Heavenly Father. The sound advice of the Psalmist elsewhere is, Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. He shall make thy righteousness as clear as the light, and thy just dealings as the noon-day. But we will pass on to the prayer of the afflicted servant of God.

Ver. 3—4. There is no small danger, while we are suffering under the malicious persecution of an enemy, that we may be wearied out and overcome by his perseverance, and for the sake of a hollow peace, let go our own integrity. And this, to the wicked, is a greater triumph than even the crushing of his victim. David therefore prays that the eyes of his understanding may be enlightened, lest his uprightness should be shaken, his consciousness of integrity overcome, and lest he should fall into that moral and spiritual death, which is indicated by the yielding up of principle to a seeming necessity. For then would his enemies boast that they had indeed prevailed against him, and cast him down from that proud eminence, from which the righteous only can look upward in faith to their God, and downward with contempt upon their foes; under the sure and certain hope of deliverance and triumph.

Ver. 5—6. And the Psalmist does not long dwell upon complaint or prayer, before that joyful hope animates him to break forth into the song of praise; as though he were already assured of the hearing of his complaint, the answering of his prayer, the attainment of his desire. His trust is strong, and

therefore his heart is joyful before the Lord. He can sing and give praise with the best member that he has: for, having already experienced that the Lord had in time past dealt lovingly with his soul, he could rely upon the divine mercies through the seasons of trial yet for to come. Such, brethren, is the power of faith—that faith which, though it is the gift of God, must yet be cultivated and cherished by an habitual rendering to God the honour due unto his Name, as the source and fountain of all the blessings of this life, and of all our hope of that which is to come. For at his disposal alone are all the issues of life and of death. If this be borne constantly in mind, so as to produce a practical effect on your lives, happy are ye!

PSALM 14.

This Psalm consists principally of a general and energetic condemnation of the folly of the infidel; a character which it may be presumed was more common in the days of the Jewish dispensation, than since the Messiah came upon earth, a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel. But the general corruption of mankind, and the perverse enmity of the wicked against the true worshippers of God, are also subjects of this Psalm.

Ver. 1—2. The very existence of an infidel where the Gospel has been made known for a thousand years, would seem an impossibility, if the fact were not before our eyes: the folly of the thing is too manifest for many to have the boldness to avow it: but let us only remember the distinction made by the Psalmist, and we shall not be driven to look far around us for some samples of these lost sheep. The fool denies in his heart the existence of a God, while he is too much of a coward to proclaim it with his lips. Yet does his life and conduct betray him to an observing world. By their fruits ye shall know them, is a mark set upon them by the two-edged sword of the Divine Word: and by this test will they be tried by their fellow men. There is first, the absence of all practical good from their lives and conversation. They are neither friendly with their neighbours, nor just in their dealings, nor honest

with their lips: they are liars and slanderers of their equals and superiors, whether in virtue or in station. In short, they are selfish; and in this one vice are swallowed up all the best feelings and dispositions of our common nature: for he who owns not a duty to God will admit of no obligations towards his fellow-man. I speak not of the avowed infidel, for that is a very rare character: but how shall we judge of the practical infidel from his carriage towards God? He constantly pollutes the Sabbath; he despises the ministration and the ordinances of religion; the Sacraments are in his sight only the forms of priestcraft; and altogether he denies God in his heart and life. Of such it is, that the Psalmist avers that they are corrupt and abominable in their doings: and the Apostle Paul has plainly and truly accounted for their depravity; for even, says he, as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, He gave them over to a reprobate mind: to change the Truth of God into a lie: to worship and serve the creature more than the Creator. Now, brethren, I ask, is it possible for you to think and reflect, and meditate for a moment, and not call to mind some whom you know, and to whom all these terms of condemnation fully apply? And what are they other than practical infidels, those who say in their heart there is no God? The Psalmist, however, describes them in one word—they are fools.

Ver. 3—10. These verses form together such an unbroken continuation of description, that it would be injudicious and unjust to separate them: but they bear me out fully in my appeal to your own knowledge of the existence of such a class of men as the practical infidel. The gainsaying of all spiritual religion must have been a wide spreading contagion in the days of David: for he tells us poetically and figuratively, that the Lord looked down upon the children of men, to see if there were any that would understand and seek after God: and he repeats the declaration of the second verse, that there is none that doeth good, no not one. And what a horrid catalogue of hate-

ful qualities does he ascribe to the infidel, the denier of God in his heart! The foul exhalations of the sepulchre in their throat; deceit in their tongues; poison under their lips; cursing and bitterness in their mouth; their feet swift to shed blood; destruction and unhappiness in their ways; ignorance of the way of peace; blindness to the fear of the Omnipotent and offended God; having no knowledge, that is, no common sense; workers of mischief; devourers and oppressors of the humble and needy, until they even ceased to call upon the Lord, being, as the Psalmist affirms, in great fear where no fear was: by reason that the Israelite indeed and the true Christian are never deserted by their Heavenly Father, for God is in the generation of the righteous: though the infidel will mock at them, because they put their trust in the Lord.

Ver. 11. Our Prayer Book translation of this verse is somewhat obscure, and that of the Bible more so; and our best Commentators do not clearly explain it. I take it, however, as an aspiration of the Psalmist in behalf of that portion of the Israelites who were then in bondage, and far from that beloved home, which is so pathetically lamented in the 137th Psalm. This is at least a reasonable interpretation. But if it also bear, as others suppose, a more spiritual meaning, as a prayer for the deliverance of the captives from the spiritual darkness that necessarily surrounded them in a heathen land; then may we, brethren, draw consolation from the reflection, that we are enjoying the glorious liberty of the children of God; that our lines are cast in pleasant places; that we have the knowledge of the glory of God in Christ Jesus, as revealed to us in the everlasting Gospel, and ministered to us from Sabbath, to Sabbath; and that if we are doers of the Word, and not hearers only, neither principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore,

Glory be to the Father, &c.

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LECTURE V.

PSALM 15.

The conditions of acceptance with God, as set forth in this Psalm, although they have a sole reference to the dispensation of the Law, are not less necessary to be observed under that of the Gospel; wherein we find throughout, the reiteration and enforcement of the doctrine of the necessity of practical godliness, so well compressed in that one precept of the Apostle to Titus; that the professors of Christ's religion should be instructed in the necessity of maintaining good works; for that they are good and profitable unto men. The Psalmist's doctrine here leads to the same point, though delivered without the immediate sanction of our great High Priest, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

Ver. 1—7. The entire Psalm is a continuous catalogue of the moral qualifications which entitle a man to be considered a faithful professor of Religion, and consequently a worthy member of the Holy Catholic Church of God upon earth. For these practical virtues are the evidences of the faith that abideth within: and however independent of the sanctions of the Gospel, are fully confirmed by the requirements of the later dispensation. A good tree cannot produce evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit; wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. John the Baptist warned his hearers not to rely upon their natural prerogatives for salvation; not to boast that they had Abraham for their father, as though the virtues of the patriarch were sufficient for all who should descend from him. Every tree must be valued for the fruit it bears, from whatever stock it had been raised; and that which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. The Psalmist has anticipated this evangelical doctrine but by a different figure. Lord, who shall dwell in thy Tabernacle: or who shall rest upon thy holy hill? Not the hypocrite whose religious profession is an untimely blossom, put forth for shew; but he that like a tree planted by the water-side bringeth forth

his fruit in due season : that is, he who lives, and thinks, and speaks, and acts, as becomes his profession : in his acknowledgment of a supreme Lawgiver he will not be puffed up with spiritual pride, as if free from all obligations of duty to his brethren and his neighbours ; but in all his actions will be constrained by the law of love to do unto all men as he would they should do unto him. It is of the doer of the work of this law that St. James pronounces that he shall be blessed in his deeds ; and the Psalmist's judgment of him is equally encouraging :—Whoso doeth these things shall never fall.

PSALM 16.

This is a memorable Psalm, as predictive of Christ's triumphant resurrection, and as having been quoted by St. Peter on the day of Pentecost, when preaching to an immense assemblage of Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven ; (*Acts. ii* ;) upon which occasion, it is recorded, three thousand souls were converted, and baptized, and added to the Church of Christ. David was himself unquestionably a vivid type of the Messiah ; but as the type is necessarily inferior in dignity to the person who is thereby prefigured, the Psalmist, though speaking throughout in his own person, almost imperceptibly advances from out of himself, as it were, into a prophetic style of language, that can be applicable to none but the true David, the risen Son of God. The Psalm is in short, an effusion of mingled terms, some of which apply to the writer only and personally, some to him as the type of the Messiah, some to Christ exclusively. Every portion, however, is expressive of David's faith in the divine promises.

Ver. 1, 2. These two verses can be interpreted only as an outpouring of prayer of the Psalmist's own heart : they implore the almighty protection on the plea that in God alone is his entire trust ; that this trust is the very life and sustenance of his soul ; that he places no reliance upon any temporal wealth for his happiness or safety ; but acknowledging the supreme Lord of heaven and earth to be his God, on Him only he relies for preservation and every attendant blessing. Even in these verses, however, there is a foreshadowing, not only of his own

approaching sovereignty, but of that universal dominion of which David's establishment on the throne of Israel is an acknowledged type; for he thus makes known his determination of the manner in which he will conduct his government:—

Ver. 3—5. Here it is seen that not only was the kingdom of Israel a prefiguration of that of Messiah; but that David himself was a true type of the great Pattern of Holiness, Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Godhead manifest in the flesh. For as He announced to his disciples, that the Holy Spirit should reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; so David, moved by the same Spirit, proclaims his resolve to signalize his coming reign, by the protection and encouragement of all such as excel in virtue; and by his marked abhorrence of the unbeliever and the profane idolater: so that their very names shall be held by him in too great abomination to be pronounced by his lips.

Ver. 6—8. In these verses is perceptible the mingled sense, applicable to the condition and experience of the anointed king of Israel, and prophetic of those of Messiah, when He should come upon earth to establish his kingdom. David confesses of himself, that all he possesses or hopes for is his inheritance under the divine promise; and is therefore confident that his lot in life will be maintained by the same gracious Power who bestowed it. And here is a grateful acknowledgment, that his heritage is a goodly possession in a fair land, the prospect of which he enjoys the more, for having experienced the warning chastisements of the Lord, in his past progress towards his high earthly destiny. And it must be borne in mind, that much of our Saviour's recorded language has a resemblance to this; that much of his experience, while fulfilling his ministry here, had been foreshadowed in the life of David; He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and He was ever prayerfully and humbly acknowledging, that the portion of his inheritance and of his cup was of his

Heavenly Father ; which is strongly exemplified, typically, in the following verses.

Ver. 9—12. The two leading verses of this portion bear the double application ; for while they are descriptive of David's faith, and of the gladness of heart which he derived from it ; they are accommodated to the evangelical histories of our Saviour's daily life. In every utterance of his lips, in every action of his life, in his frequent retirements for private prayer, in his fastings, in the recorded temptations He sustained, and in his conflicts with a stubborn and faithless generation, the man Christ Jesus uniformly evinced his consciousness of the ever-watchful Presence of his Heavenly Father, and of his all-sufficient support in every appointed trial. It is in his human character only that we can apply these prophetic passages to the Son of God : for in his seasons of special communion with God the Father, He was withdrawn from the pressure of his temporal sufferings, and could rejoice in the certainty, that after He should have passed the pangs of crucifixion and death, his flesh should rest in hope ; corruption should have no power over that body which He had taken upon Him, as the instrument of redeeming mankind from the consequences of spiritual corruption : the path of *Life*, that state of perfect existence of which we, brethren, can form no clear conception, lay before Him ; the path that should lead to the fulness of joy which is diffused only in the eternal and inalienable Presence of the ever-blessed Trinity ; and where, at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high, the seat of supremest honour, He should employ Eternity in the holy delight of receiving and dispensing pleasure for evermore !

PSALM 17.

This is a prayer of David : but, as the foundation of his hope that his prayer will be heard, he institutes a comparison between his own claims to Divine Mercy before the judgment-seat of the All-seeing God, and those of his enemies ; and professes

his perfect innocence of those charges which they falsely make the ground of their hostility. It was in suffering as well as in faithfulness, that the anointed king of Israel was a type of the man Christ Jesus. There prevails therefore in many of his divine compositions a strength and magnificence of language, which in its fullest interpretation can be accommodated only to the purity and sanctity of the Redeemer; whose perfect rule of life, as seen in Himself, admitted of no comparison. But David wrote under the influence of divine inspiration; and while pouring forth his own prayers, his own complaints, his own professions of faithfulness, could not help (so to speak) pourtraying the character of Him, of whom he himself was the progenitor according to the flesh; and of whom it had been promised that He should sit upon the throne of David for ever.

Ver. 1—3. The bold confidence of David in his own comparative integrity is here, as in many other passages of the Psalms, truly marvellous. I speak as an accountable being, conscious of my own consciousness of infirmity, and natural impurity, and consequent liability to offences in the sight of God, to which my own self-love may possibly have blinded my own eyes. Such, brethren, is our common condition; yet we may approach the mercy-seat in the strong assurance of faith, that while we overlook, or have forgotten, our own transgressions, the God of Grace will at the same time be not extreme to mark what we have done amiss; but that in our supplications He will hearken unto the prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips. And this is our possible degree of integrity in the act of prayer, however deeply laden with the deeds of acted guilt. Let my sentence come forth from *thy* presence, and let *thine* eyes look upon the thing that is equal. Here is an appeal to the mercy of God against his strict justice, an imploration that He might weigh the eternally-settled provisions of that mercy against the misdeeds of the sinner. But in what follows we find the boldest portion of the passage; too bold, indeed, for our approval or comprehension even, unless by interpreting it as a vow of future obedience rather than a boast of past perfectness;—Thou hast tried me, and shall find no wickedness in me; for I am utterly purposed that my mouth shall not offend. In the sense therefore which I attach to this passage, we find an

exemplary lesson of instruction. None of us can recal the past ; few of us can remember all our transgressions ; but all may implore the divine mercy ; and while so doing, may form resolutions, with the aid of divine grace, that not even with our mouth will we again wilfully offend.

Ver. 4—7. The first of these verses contains an avowal of the principle upon which the Psalmist had hitherto acted ; the same that he recommends in the first Psalm as the security of temporal happiness, or blessedness ; namely, the habitual shunning of evil communications, whether with the ungodly, the sinner, or the irreligious scorner. The remaining verses constitute a prayer for grace to persevere, to be sustained, to be holden up in the ways of practical godliness, that his footsteps slip not. But he trusts to experience the marvellous loving-kindness of the Lord, only in answer to devout supplication for the needed mercies. Such is the tenor of the Gospel Law—Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full—and this Law requires something more than the prayer that goeth out of feigned lips—the mere utterance of a form of words. If we ask and receive not, it is because we ask amiss. The Psalmist appeals unto God as the Saviour of them who put their trust in Him. Faith is the grand and prominent condition of the acceptance of all our offerings ; whether of prayer, of praise, or of deeds ; and whether the objects of such oblations be the blessings of eternal salvation, or merely temporal deliverance from the evil influences of such as know not God, and obey not his commandments ; thus resisting, as the Psalmist's forcible expression is, the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Ver. 8—16. This fine supplication of the devout spirit of David is evidently prompted by some existing hostilities, either openly carried on, or devised in the secret councils of Saul and his envious adherents—the ungodly that compassed him about to take away his soul. It is too descriptive to be the work of the imagination only ; though it applies equally to the enemies

of David and to the adversaries of Christ's Holy Catholic Church upon earth. The figurative expression that they are inclosed in their own fat, while their mouth speaketh proud things, conveys a very just idea of the blindness and haughtiness of a multitude leagued together in defiance of all moral restraint, and neither fearing God nor regarding man. Such was the experience of David in his many seasons of adversity—such was the contradiction of sinners to our Divine Master and his faithful disciples, in their united endeavours to establish the reign of righteousness over the earth. The pride, pomp, and circumstance of kingly power were arrayed in open hostility, alike against the anointed king and the Holy One of Israel: in each case they had taken counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed: their language in each case bore a similar import—we will not have this man to reign over us! Yet were these rebellious foes of God and man permitted to possess their portion of the good things of this life—they were filled with the hidden treasures of the distributive Providence of the God whom they denied, abused, and opposed. Such are his mercies and forgivenesses, and long-suffering to us-ward. Such are human ingratitude, and human pride and obstinacy, when engaged in the pursuit of unhallowed objects. But, says the pious king of Israel, but as for me, I will behold thy Presence in righteousness; that is, by following after righteousness. I will seek thy face, until I behold as in a glass the perfect glory of the Lord; and being changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord, I shall go down to the grave in peace; and when I awake up after thy likeness,—when Thou shalt have changed this vile body, according to the mighty power whereby Thou art able to subdue all things to Thyself,—I shall be satisfied with it.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE VI.

PSALM 18.

An old and very learned writer on the Psalms pronounces this to be a most beautiful specimen of poetic skill, in the form of a triumphant celebration of the power and goodness of the Eternal God, displayed in the deliverance of his servant David from the evil designs of all his enemies. Though it was probably composed after the full establishment of the king upon the throne of Israel, it is introduced in this manner in the second Book of Samuel, (c. 22,)—And David spake unto the Lord the words of this song, in the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul. As, however, David was the type of Christ, and Christ the Head of the Church, our true David, this Psalm is deemed to be prophetically commemorative of the honour and glory of his victories over the common foe of mankind, in whose nature (that is, David's) our Lord and Saviour achieved the final triumph over death and the powers of darkness.

Ver. 1—6. The strength and copiousness of these expressions indicate a degree of love or faithfulness, in the acknowledgment of which the inspired writer seems to feel that no language can be too ornate or emphatic. And he justifies his extreme devotedness, by calling to mind and enumerating the many and deep afflictions from which he had been delivered; calling upon the Lord, as alone worthy of the praise due to such signal mercies, and trusting in Him only for future safety from all his enemies. And however figurative the language in which the Psalmist has expressed the nature and extremity of his past perils, the records of them in the two Books of Samuel prove that they are truly described, when he declares that the overflowings of ungodliness made him afraid; that the snares of death overtook him; that the sorrows of death compassed him, and the pains of hell came about him. In his trouble, therefore, he had called upon the Lord, and complained unto his God; until He stooped from his Tabernacle on high to hear the cries of his faithful and afflicted servant, who had persevered

in urging his complaint, until it had entered even into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

Ver. 7—15. These poetic descriptions are such as no writer, moved by mere enthusiasm, could have dared to adopt, except under the guidance of some extraordinary instinct or inspiration. The same judgment may be pronounced of the entire passage now read to you. It baffles all comment, it admits of no analysis, it defies every attempt to explain or enlarge upon it. The grandeur of the scenery which it unfolds to the mind's eye impresses the soul with that kind of awe, and almost to the same degree, which was felt by the band of men and officers, when the Incarnate Son of God announcing Himself to be the person whom they sought, they went backward, and fell to the ground. And this descriptive vision of the inspired poet is equalled in magnificence only by the record of the Evangelist St. Matthew, of what actually took place after our Lord's crucifixion; when from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour: and behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose. We may therefore safely apply this sublime vision of the Psalmist to the awful scenes of that day, when the Son of Man shall come again in his glory, and all his holy angels with Him, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel.

Ver. 16—24. As it is stated in the prophet Samuel's History that it was soon after the death of Saul that David spake before the Lord all the words of this song, we must venture to change the tense in which these verses read, that is, from the past to the future; for the troubles of the son of Jesse ended with the life of his great enemy: or, as they stand, they must have a prospective reference to the rebellion of Absalom. We are not justified, however, in thus applying them. This diversity of

time is not infrequent in our translation from the original language. We may read, therefore, He *hath* sent down from on high to fetch me: He *hath* delivered me from my strongest enemy. This was David's happy position at the moment of Saul's death: he was delivered from them which hated him, and were too mighty for him; the Lord being his upholder. The verses which follow breathe the spirit of thanksgiving, rather than of prayer, which affords another good reason for the change of time already spoken of, as it respects the two preceding verses. For the Psalmist, acknowledging that the Lord had brought him forth into a place of liberty, because He had a favour unto him, foresees the future reward of his own integrity and righteous dealing, and proclaims it with all the confidence of the strongest faith. There never was seen, perhaps, in any generation of mankind, any other person in whom the power of religious faith manifested itself with so much strength, and in such unabated continuance and growth, as in the character of David. There are examples of a sublime resignation to the will of God in the last extremity, to be found in Holy Writ, as that of the dying Jacob in the Old Testament, and that of the martyr Stephen in the New. But it was the duty and the high privilege of the Psalmist to record from time to time his own immoveable faithfulness, through many years of the severest trial and the most imminent dangers; as well as under the more encouraging experience of deliverances from them. In all, he acknowledges the hand of God: and it is upon his grateful reflections on the past that he founds his reasonable confidence of future protection, and guidance, and recompense. It is, however, from his own consciousness of integrity that he derives encouragement to come boldly to the throne of grace, to look for future mercies, and with the hope to find grace in all his times of need. And herein lies the true secret of obtaining that great gift of God, a true and lively faith. No man can ask any thing in faith, believing, while his conscience is burthened

with the weight of past sins, unrepented of; or while labouring under that greater impediment to advancement in spiritual life, an evil heart of unbelief in the necessity of Christian practical obedience. Yet how few are they who can approach the Mercy Seat with those inspiring reflections which animated the courage of the son of Jesse:—I have kept the ways of the Lord; I have an eye unto all his laws; I was also uncorrupt before Him, and eschewed mine own wickedness. Upon this rested his confidence in the Divine Justice, as well as in the mercy of his God. Therefore, says he, (and this thanksgiving for coming mercies is repeated,) therefore shall the Lord reward me after my righteous dealing; and according unto the cleanness of my hands in his eye-sight.

Ver. 25—29. The language of the two first of these verses is obscure, if not mysterious, as addressed to God Himself: but they bear an explanation which will make plain their hidden meaning to the humblest mind. The sense of the passage is, that he who to the best of his ability hath striven to purify his mind from unclean and unholy thoughts, and his life from positive vices; he can desire nothing that he will not find in the perfect purity of the Divine Character. This was exemplified before the eyes of men in the life of our Saviour, who was the Deity Himself, manifest in the flesh: this passage therefore may be taken as prophetic of our incarnate Redeemer's exemplary course upon earth. But with God the Judge of all, the froward and evil minded man shall learn the fierceness of his anger against the wickedness of his doings: he shall find that the Almighty not only opposes a firm and irresistible hand to his presumptuous course; but that He is in the end a consuming fire to all such as delight in lies, and in the frowardness of the wicked. All sinfulness is pride; and as this is in the sight of God the object of his deepest hatred, so is humility of mind the earnest of all other Christian virtues: and that which He will accept in the absence of more ostensible and active graces.

This is what is meant by saving the people that are in adversity. David felt the value of this sacred ornament in himself: it inspired him with comfort and confidence that subdued all his fears: it shed a light upon all the ways of adversity which he had trodden:—Thou also shalt light *my* candle; the Lord my God shall make my darkness to be light. So that, how numerous soever mine enemies, how mighty and threatening their bulwarks raised against me; by the help of my God I shall triumph over them, and pursue my victorious course, in the exercise of that authority which He hath placed in my hands.

Ver. 30, 31. These two verses consist of a pious reflection of the Psalmist, introductory to a long enumeration of the mercies he had experienced, and the support he yet hoped to experience, at the hand of his God. He meditates on the way of God, on the Word of God, and on the faithfulness of God, as the defence of all who put their trust in Him. It is necessary, my brethren, first to obtain a knowledge of God, before we can reasonably hope to acquire that faith in him which is the source of all true peace here, and the earnest of eternal peace and safety hereafter. We can gather a knowledge of his ways, that is, of his providential dealings with mankind, only from those long preserved records of his government, which were written for our learning. The brief history of the Creation, which is unquestionably a work of divine inspiration, is only an introduction to the knowledge of the Creator, gradually expanded through the details of the manner in which He displayed his attributes to the understanding of his intelligent creatures, in the exercise of his universal sovereignty. We who have the advantage over any one generation of our earlier progenitors, of comparing the progress of events through thousands of years—we are enabled, as it were at one glance, to see the connexion of causes and effects, in all the operations of Divine Power, and in all the dispensations of Divine Providence; and the better we acquaint ourselves with the historical records of God's dealings

with every generation, and with every distinct division of the human race, the more shall we be constrained, nay, compelled to acknowledge, that the way of God is an undefiled way:—"O God Omnipotent! how perfect is the way of the Lord! how just and equal the reasons of his Providence!"* Let us take only the history of the seed of Abraham, from their first separation as a distinct people, to their final dispersion, and we shall require no other text whereon to build up a just though imperfect conviction, that the way of the Lord is an undeviating course of truth and equity. So also, as the Psalmist proclaims, is the Word of the Lord tried in the fire. And perhaps not less in our own day, than in the time of the Egyptian bondage of his people, or in that of their subsequent deliverance. The awful threatenings of divine vengeance are recorded for our caution; yet how numerous, how continuous are our provocations! By these is the Word of the Lord tried. For though, as the Apostle reminds his Roman converts, though God hath said, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; yet is this no encouragement to presumption; for the same written Word proclaims the incorruptibility of Divine Justice. And God's faithfulness is no less manifest in the dispensation of his judgments, than in that of his forbearance and loving-kindness towards his creatures: though herein, as the Psalmist intimates, is the display of his brightest attribute:—He is the defender of all them that put their trust in Him. It is as the reward of our faithfulness that God, through Jesus Christ, manifests his faithfulness towards us: in that He forgiveth all our sin, and healeth all our infirmities; and hath saved our life from destruction, and crowned us with mercy and loving-kindness. And to inspire the faithfulness which leads to this consummation, the Psalmist thus argues:—Who is God, but the Lord: or who hath any strength, except our God?

* Amyraldus (*in loco*) in Davidis Psalmos.

Ver. 32—51. Though, as it has been stated in the opening argument of this Psalm, it is prophetically commemorative of the honour and glory of Christ's dominion over all things and for ever; yet this view of it is a fitter subject for private meditation than for a written commentary. We will confine its application therefore to the Psalmist himself, his experience, and his strong faith. The voice of inspiration is echoed in every passage of this triumphant hymn—the celebration of a future and perfect triumph, rather than of any past stages of a protected and victorious life. David, however, humbly ascribes all his prospective power and success to Jehovah, who had so long and so signally shielded him from unequalled perils. And though he speaks of blessings in prospect with as strong a certainty as if they were in possession; he does not overlook his own past frailties, nor think ungratefully of his past sufferings, as though they were the unmerited inflictions of the divine anger; but he ascribes to them the healing and strengthening power, which manifests the love of God, in all his chastisements of the children whom He loveth. David admits, at once honestly and piously, that his advancing greatness shall not be less owing to the divine correction than to the divine support:—Thy right hand shall hold me up, and thy loving correction shall make me great. And this duty performed, the inspired penman revels as it were in the boundless vision of the temporal blessings that await him, as the anointed ruler of God's peculiar people, as the conservator of Israel's peace, and as the guardian of the Sanctuary, now established on the hill of Zion which God loved. It is difficult for us, brethren, to enter into the feelings which must have warmed the breast of the pious young king at this moment of exultant faith; but the re-perusal of these twenty verses again and again, must kindle in the dullest heart a joyous sympathy with the grateful historian of his own experience: and especially among those who have attentively read the sacred biography of his earlier eventful life. And it is

impossible to dissect this rapturous hymn of anticipant thanksgiving, without marring its beauty. It is a continuous flow of joyous pride, upon which the mind of the reader may glide onward in pleasant contemplation, until he is made to partake in the conviction of the Psalmist himself, of how joyful and pleasant a thing it is to be thankful. None of us, my brethren, have passed our lives thus far, without having experienced very many motives to thankfulness to the Giver of all good; and however humble our condition here, we are no less the objects and the subjects of Almighty care. It may be that we are too unmindful of the Source from whence all our blessings spring; and that we need occasionally to be awakened to a sense of our dependance upon the inexhaustible love of our Heavenly Father, by the chastisements of his hand, by the rod of his correction. It were far more promotive, however, of our perfect and uninterrupted peace, to make his law our study, to follow the bright examples of faith and obedience recorded in the lively Oracles of Divine Truth, and to seek his grace to help us in our experience of temptation or of need. The fervent outpourings of the pious spirit of David may alone guide us into all truth, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, if we meditate upon them with a teachable mind, and a heart disposed to learn the ways of God, in his dealings with his favoured creatures. The Psalms are a treasury of practical wisdom, unequalled in fullness, in richness, in usefulness, by any other portions of the Scriptures written for our learning, and preserved for our use, previous to the advent of our Great High Priest Himself: for as the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, so were the holy and inspired writers who lived under that dispensation, exemplars to us of the gainfulness of that godliness, which is more clearly defined, and more authoritatively enforced, in the glorious Gospel of the ever-blessed God. Therefore,

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE VII.

PSALM 19.

This Psalm is appointed by the Church to be used as one of the proper Psalms for Christmas Day. That which prompted David to pen this beautiful effusion seems to have been nothing more particular than his own ardent pervading piety, musing on subjects most congenial to his gifted spirit, and looking through Nature up to Nature's God. For the subjects on which he expatiates are,—first, the order of the visible creation, especially the structure of the heavens, as most impressively proclaiming the glory of their Creator to the understanding of men:—secondly, he contends that the Word of God, the written revelation of the Divine Character, graciously given to man by the unsearchable counsels of Jehovah, are yet more conducive to his acquiring that knowledge which shall make him wise unto salvation:—and the conclusion is the prayerful outpouring of a spirit humbled by the contemplation of its own comparative impurity and weakness. The Psalm is plainly and purely preceptive, though introduced under the most graceful poetic adornments.

Ver. 1—6. It is a hard task, brethren, for even the preacher to address his fellow-sinners in words of reproach, though he use only the most general terms, from the application of which he is no more exempt than any one of those to whom he addresses himself. But we are justified in resorting to plainness of speech, by a thousand examples from among those who have laboured most for the common enlightenment and improvement of our nature. Poets, philosophers, and divines, among uninspired men, have recorded their condemnation of the common blindness of humanity to all the evidences in favour of both natural and revealed religion, which are presented in the visible works of creation. Beyond these, we have our Saviour's parables pointing plainly to the same end. And however strange it may appear at first sight to the unreflecting reader, the opening portion of this Psalm, which I have just now read, conveys a silent reproof of the insensibility, the common insensibility of our fallen nature, not one jot less forcible, though less direct,

than that of our great Poet of the Seasons, after enumerating the visible testimonies of inanimate things to the love, the glory, the bounteousness, and the awful power of their and our common Creator. But, says he,

But, wandering oft with brute unconscious gaze,
 Man marks not Thee! marks not the mighty hand,
 That, ever busy, wheels the silent spheres;
 Works in the secret deep; shoots, steaming, thence,
 The fair profusion that o'erspreads the Spring;
 Flings from the sun direct the flaming day;
 Feeds ev'ry creature; hurls the tempest forth;
 And, as on earth this grateful change revolves,
 With transport touches all the springs of life!

Thus also the Psalmist appeals to the hearts and consciences of men, while setting forth, in the most impressive language, the testimony of God's intrinsic glory, as proclaimed by those magnificent creations of his power, which cannot be hid from our eyes. Does he not, therefore, in the mere description of these visible wonders, convict us to our own thoughts of an habitual insensibility to their speech and language; to their plain declarations of the glory of their Maker; to their daily repetition of lessons of wisdom and love, upon them written for our learning? Yes—for though their sounds are gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world, yet is their appeal to our sensibilities treated as an idle tale which we regard not: we are even as the deaf adder that stoppeth her ears; which refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. But there are also other and stronger appeals to our reason in this sublime anthem. For,

Ver. 7—11. The revelation of the Divine Will and the imparted knowledge of the Divine Character are the surest testimonies of God's love to his creature, man: for without that revelation, all the children of Adam must still have wandered on in the darkness which was entailed by their parents' transgression. And here, in order to win our confidence to this gracious

communication, the Psalmist enlarges very eloquently upon its perfections, as adapted by Divine Wisdom to the necessities of our fallen nature. This is the moral law as contained in the ten commandments—the only law which was given to God's chosen people, (*Luke x*)—that law, the observance of which, our Saviour Himself assured a self-righteous enquirer, is sufficient to insure eternal life; and which is limited to two distinct heads, the love of God and the love of our neighbour. A very little of the experience, brethren, of which we all have had more or less, or rather a very little reflection on that experience, will force home to our feelings the conviction, that much of our temporal happiness is promoted and secured by the observance of the second requirement of the law—the love of our neighbour: and reason alone may convince us, that without cherishing in our souls a love towards God, we can have no ground of hope that we are or shall be, here or hereafter, the objects of the divine love—no knowledge of it, beyond the painful consciousness that it has been offered to us, and either scornfully or heedlessly rejected. It were vain for uninspired human wisdom to indite, though in many more words, so impressive and copious a discourse, or one so persuasive of the belief of the simplicity that is in true godliness, (*2 Cor. xi, 3*), as is contained in the few verses of the Psalm, which were last quoted. A well-known divine sums up his meditations upon them with this appropriate prayer, “Lord, give us affections towards thy Word in some measure proportioned to its excellence: for we can never love too much what we can never admire enough.”

Bp. Horne.

Ver. 12—15. The conclusion of this Psalm is scarcely less valuable than the other portions, as affording subjects for meditation and self-examination. The inspired penman, after musing on the awful perfections of the Deity, as manifested in his works, and in the beneficent adaptation of his Law to our wants and necessities, retreats into the secret chambers of his own

heart, and makes the confession that it is deceitful above all things; for that it is ignorant of even those offences, of which it is the very birth-place and the nursery:—Who can tell how oft he offendeth? Here then David shews the necessity of that cautionary proverb, which is bequeathed to us by his own gifted son:—Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. And the pious father instructs us in the true principle of this effective watchfulness—prayer and the heart-worship which alone is acceptable to the God of the spirits of all flesh:—O cleanse Thou me from my secret faults: keep me from presumptuous sins; for Thou, Lord, knowest my frailty; my weakness in resisting the power of Satan over my soul; and the great danger lest those evil desires be indulged in imaginary secrecy, until by undetected advances they get the dominion over me. And the ground of the Psalmist's confidence in prayer is, that the Lord is our strength and our Redeemer.

PSALM 20.

Some expositors think otherwise, but others have given satisfactory reasons for applying this Psalm to the history of David's triumphs over the Ammonites and Syrians, as recorded *2 Sam. x*, interpreting it as a Psalm of Thanksgiving for the occasion. It has been also suggested, that as David was a type of Jesus Christ, the language of the Psalm may be justly appropriated by the Church, as descriptive of her alternate trials and triumphs. It was probably used in the service of the Tabernacle as an interlocutory anthem, the several parts being chaunted alternately, by David himself as the priest, and by the people in responson.

Ver. 1—4. This portion of the Psalm, interpreting it as suggested, is the part with which the priest opens the act of devotion, and uttered as an intercessory prayer for Israel. And if the occasion has been rightly conjectured, the order of the Psalm presents an admirable lesson of humility to every individual, worthy of deep meditation. For though the present may be a season of rejoicing, a season wherein we may shout to God with the voice of triumph, yet none can tell what a day may bring forth. The Psalmist therefore opens with a prayer in behalf of

Israel, embracing her possible future condition. The pious warrior does not presumptuously conclude, that because to-day the God of the armies of Israel has given them victory in the battle, they shall be therefore safe under his shield and buckler in all future conflicts and in all distant time. But he exhorts them, by implication, to offer up their prayers against future trouble, to depend upon help only from the Sanctuary, and strength from out of Zion; to be punctually obedient in their commanded offerings and sacrifices, in order that they may be ever present in God's remembrance; and that, in manifestation of his acceptance of their obedience, He may grant them their heart's desire, and fulfil all their mind. I have said that all this is implied in the act of David's prayer, and in the peculiar construction of that prayer, which could not but operate as a check upon any intemperate indulgence of mere rejoicing. But, this duty performed, the people are permitted to give utterance to their subdued exultation.

Ver. 5—9. The congregation begin with a suitable response to the priest's intercessory prayer, confessing that of the Lord alone they have obtained salvation from defeat, and a triumphant victory over their enemies; and uniting their own prayer to that of their leader, that the Lord may perform all the petitions offered by him on Israel's behalf. And as we take this Psalm as a commemoration of the signal victories obtained over the Ammonites and the Syrians in close succession, we cannot but admire the appropriateness of the language chosen for the occasion. In these conflicts, as upon other like occasions, there must have hung a doubt of the issue upon the minds of those engaged, even with past experiences of God's interposing defence: but this was indeed a memorable instance of the divine interposition; for we read that David slew the men of seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen. Well, then, may the survivors of this tremendous contest exclaim, each one for himself, Now know I that the Lord helpeth

his Anointed, and will hear him from his holy heaven: now know I that He will defend his servant David with the wholesome strength of his right hand. We will therefore remember the Name of the Lord our God: for if He be for us, who shall be against us? We have witnessed the hordes of our ungodly foes rushing upon us in battle array, and flushed with pride in the consciousness of their overwhelming strength: but they had put their trust in chariots and in horses! Yet hast Thou delivered us out of their hands, and spared us to praise thy Name in thy holy Temple. We are risen from the depths of danger and impending destruction, while they are brought down and fallen. Thus is the beauty of this sacred anthem brought out by the history of the occasion which prompted the inspired writer to its composition: and it is perfected by the return of the Psalmist's thoughts to that dependent humility and submissive confidence, which are most plainly manifested and best expressed in the language of prayer:—Save, Lord, and hear us, O King of Heaven, when we call upon Thee!

PSALM 21.

As this Psalm is used in the service for Ascension Day, the presumption is, that its general interpretation has been applied to our Lord. And though the Jews in common understand it as descriptive of David's experience and exaltation, some of their writers apply it to Messiah. Under the first idea it has been considered as a continuation of the preceding anthem, which notion is supported by the title of the Psalm; wherein it is said to be composed by David, and given to the Master of Symphonies, to be publicly sung in the Tabernacle. The general turn of its language, however, is too high to be strictly applicable to an earthy monarch; yet in some passages of too ambiguous a character to be exclusively appropriate to our Lord. The reader will therefore occasionally advert to each, as his thoughts may be impressed by the alternations of figurative and descriptive terms.

Ver. 1—7. The sense of these verses may, to a certain extent, be exclusively applied to David himself; for there is an evident connexion between this and the preceding Psalm, indicating that both were written on the same occasion; the first

as a thank-offering for the people, this as an effusion of personal gratitude and adoration. Nor is it probable that the pious king, while reflecting on the gracious interposition of the Almighty for the defence and preservation of Israel, could be unmindful of his own wonderful exaltation, after so many imminent personal perils. The language of this portion of the Psalm is therefore perfectly natural, and free from mystery, as the work of a pen which was always impelled by the irresistible force of genius. The dazzling colours of the Poet's imagination are here thrown around the simplest facts; and the only difficulty is in discerning and defining those facts within their beautiful clothing. The terms of the fourth verse present the only ambiguous passage in this portion—He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest him a long life, even for ever and ever. But this is clearly explained in the narrative (2 *Sam.* vii) of the prophet Nathan's assurance given to David:—Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. This promise foreshadowed the Messiah as the heir of the house of David; but it was also as full a revelation to himself of the life eternal, as had been given to any individual under the legal dispensation. All the remaining verses of this portion are only a grateful enumeration of the blessings already vouchsafed to him, and of future mercies realized by faith. In the division which follows, however, we may clearly discern, that the Spirit of prophecy carried the penman into the higher regions of intelligence; unfolding to his view the power and majesty of Him, who is King over all, and blessed for evermore.

Ver. 8—13. Here the Psalmist, comprehending the perfectness of Messiah's dominion, and having in remembrance his own experience of the divine power and presence, in his past conflicts with the heathen nations around him, ascribes to the spiritual sway of Christ an unlimited command over the fate of all such as should be haters of the Lord, and intending

mischief against Him. This was realized in part by Christ's resurrection and ascension; and will be carried out with fearful particularity in the final judgment. Then shall his enemies feel his power, the weight of his hand. Then shall He destroy them in his displeasure, and the fire of his cherished wrath shall consume them: and not only themselves, but their offspring, whom they had corrupted by their influence and example; these shall share the general doom of the ungodly and the sinner; they shall be rooted out from the living, and consigned to the bottomless pit of everlasting destruction, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. After this review of the Majesty of the Lord as displayed in the everlasting establishment of his kingdom, the Psalmist returns to the expression of his own grateful adoration, in terms which present a remarkable contrast to those with which the Psalm opens: there, he says, The King (of Israel) shall rejoice in thy strength, O Lord: exceeding glad shall he be of thy salvation: here he ascribes the exaltation of Messiah to his own strength or omnipotence, and admits that truth to be the subject of his faithful people's everlasting joy:—Be Thou exalted, Lord, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power; “here upon earth in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; with endless hallelujahs hereafter in heaven”—*Bp. Horne.*

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE VIII.

PSALM 22.

We cannot with propriety divide the commentary on this Psalm into more than two distinct parts: for as the Psalm is selected by our Church for a portion of its service in commemoration of our Lord's Crucifixion, so it is to be considered as a representation of the passion, and a prophetic enumeration of the happy effects of his triumph over death, and his resurrection from the grave. Many passages from the Psalms are quoted in the New Testament; and if proof were wanting that these sublime compositions were dictated by the Holy Spirit, the use of them by our Saviour Himself should suffice to remove any doubt.

Ver. 1—21. It is recorded both by St. Matthew and St. Mark, in their respective accounts of Christ's crucifixion, that just before his mortal suffering had come to a close, He uttered the words with which this Psalm opens—My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? And to account for the tenor of this language from the lips of Him who was co-equal with God, we must remember, brethren, that He still bore our frail nature, and was sensible of all the tortures of perhaps the most cruel death to which man can be subjected; and we must remember also, that He made Himself a voluntary offering to this undertaking, with all its consequences foreseen and foreknown. But the Advent of the Son of God upon earth, merely to make known the truths of his ever-blessed Gospel, was not all that was necessary to appease the wrath of God, and to satisfy divine justice upon our offending race. Christ came to be a *sacrifice* for sin, in obedience to that eternal condition imposed in the councils of the Most High, that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin: and if the blood of every mere child of Adam, down to the last man, had been shed for the expiation of that man's inherited guilt, it would have been shed in vain: it could not have satisfied the fulness or perfectness of divine justice. Yet was it necessary that satisfaction should be made *in* our nature,

that wherein the offence was committed against the command of the Most High. The Divine Nature must be humbled to the level of sinful human nature, in order that the image of God in man might be cleansed of its contracted filthiness, by the descent of God Himself into the image or form and nature of man; and in that nature to make the one acceptable atonement to otherwise inexorable justice. This explains why the language of our Saviour on the cross should be and was such as is expressive of mortal agony and doubt in the extremity of *human* suffering. And the quality (so to speak) of all the language ascribed to our Redeemer in this Psalm, is throughout alike. O my God, I cry in the day time, but Thou hearest not: and in the night season also I take no rest. And Thou continuest holy, O Thou Worship of Israel. In corroboration of this view of the language of the God-man, we have the testimony of the Evangelists to his practice of retiring to a mountain apart, and in the night season, to pray; and we have also the more impressive picture of his agony in the garden, accompanied by the express words used by Him in the presence of three of his disciples. Jesus cometh with them (all) unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto them, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder: and taking with Him the three, He began to be sorrowful and very heavy. My soul, said He, is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. And He went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me! Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done! And He went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. The Psalmist's language presents therefore at once a prophecy and a picture—I cry in the day-time, and rest not in the night season. The few words which follow this passage are full of matter for deep devotional meditation. And Thou continuest holy, O Thou Worship of

Israel! The Lord our God is made known to us as full of compassion, and loving-kindness, and tenderness, even towards us his wandering and offending creatures: for as his own most holy Word assures us, God is Love. It would seem then, even to our dull feelings and faculties, that the cries of his only-begotten and beloved Son must have tempted God (which is a warranted expression) to forego his just wrath against mankind; to annul the sentence which required so precious a sacrifice as the prolonged agonizing sufferings and death of Him, who had left the bosom of the Father to endure them for the sake of sinful rebels, the work of his own hands, the children of his own care! But no—the attributes of God are unchangeable: as is his love, so is his justice: and the Son of God, to whom belongs the glory of our redemption, must bear the penalty of our transgression: He must suffer, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring *us* to God, whose sins had for a season expelled Him, as it were, from the throne of his co-equal glory in heaven. That which had been decreed from all eternity must be accomplished: the cries, the tears, the prayers of the suffering victim, the Lamb of God, must pierce the heavens in vain, until the propitiation be consummated: for, (as the Redeemer is here made to express his meek submission; for,) Thou continuest holy, O Thou Worship of Israel! Again—the man Christ Jesus is brought forward by the Psalmist, as pleading, or reasoning, in his human character—as the son of David, as of the seed of Abraham—*Our* fathers hoped in Thee: they trusted in Thee, and Thou didst deliver them. They called upon Thee, and were holpen: they put their trust in Thee, and were not confounded. We all know that in many passages of the New Testament our Lord speaks of Himself as the Son of Man. There can therefore be no impropriety in the Psalmist's imputing this language prophetically to the Saviour, in the extremity of his suffering as a man. Nor is even the expression of deeper humiliation in the verses which follow, to be deemed inappropriate; as they contain a prediction which

was fulfilled to the very letter; as was that of our Saviour's exclamation on the cross—My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? St. Matthew, in the 27th chapter of his Gospel, tells us what was the language of our Lord's revilers, as He hung upon the cross; and it was precisely that which is here predicted: As for Me, I am a worm, and no man: a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people. They that see Me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying, He trusted in God: let Him deliver Him, if He will have Him! The Jews who witnessed our Lord's crucifixion must have become extremely ignorant of the only Scriptures in their possession; or they must have employed these terms of reproach in the most hardened spirit of derision of those very Scriptures, on which they professed to found all their belief of God's partiality towards them as his chosen people. The fact, however, is wonderful, that David had written these words more than a thousand years before they were recorded by the Evangelist as the very expression of the mockery of Christ's murderers. Surely this fact offers a strong reproof to the professing Christians of the present day, who crucify the Son of God afresh, by tearing asunder his body, the visible Church on earth; and attempt to justify their schisms, by rejecting all such parts of the inspired truths of Revelation, as do not accord with the rebellious spirit which they cherish under the plea of liberty of conscience! But in this Psalm the Incarnate God is made to acknowledge his manhood in yet more precise terms: Thou art He who took me out of my mother's womb: Thou wast my hope when I hanged yet upon my mother's breasts: I have been left unto Thee ever since I was born. The simple history given by St. Matthew of the warning from God, and of the flight into Egypt, to avoid the murderous jealousy of Herod, is the best illustration of this passage; and where, as the Evangelist states, the infant Jesus, with his Virgin Mother and her espoused husband, remained until the death of Herod; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord

by the Prophet Hosea, saying—Out of Egypt have I called my Son. This brief sentence is remarkable, as establishing the doctrine of Christ's divinity, when taken in conjunction with the natural expressions of his suffering humanity, as ascribed to Him by the Psalmist. In the remaining verses of the division which I have read, we find only a continuation of those pleadings and complainings, so natural to the weakness of mere human nature in the hour of affliction. These which follow indicate the certainty of the Redeemer's glorious resurrection, and the effects which shall follow, by the establishment of his kingdom upon earth, until all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Ver. 22—32. This hymn of his approaching triumph may well be ascribed to our crucified Lord, as descriptive of those visions of eternal glory, which presented themselves in his agonies, to cheer, though not to dispel, their bitterness. He saw of the travail of his soul, and was satisfied: that is, He knew the work He had undertaken, namely, the atonement for universal guilt, must be wrought out under much tribulation: but that work was now on the eve of its accomplishment; the moments of his suffering were successively passing away; the children had come to the birth, and there had not been strength to bring forth, but for the consolation of those bright visions of immortal bliss, which should crown the Redeemer's labour of love. In confirmation of this view of Christ's foretaste of his approaching reward, let us take a glance at the immediate assurance of bliss granted to the penitent thief on the cross—the believing penitent—Lord, remember me when Thou comest into thy kingdom! Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with Me in paradise. Stronger evidence than this cannot be imagined nor desired, that the glories of the Redeemer's triumph were then opened to his view; that He was about to resume the dignity and the bliss, which for our sakes He had resigned; and that He foresaw through the vista of uncounted ages, how cordially and univer-

sally the name of the Most High God should be revered by his purchased and adopted brethren ; and his praises resounded in the great congregations of the redeemed children of Adam ; that at the annunciation of the glad tidings of salvation to be sounded throughout the earth by the Gospel trumpet, all the ends of the world should remember themselves, and be turned unto the Lord ; and all the kindreds of the nations should worship before Him ; that they should look to his bounteous hand alone for all their temporal blessings ; that they who in his good Providence had received a larger share of earthly treasures, they who had eaten and were fat, should fall down and worship Him, acknowledging Him to be the Author and Giver of all their good ; that all they who go down into the dust should kneel before Him, imploring his final acceptance through the all-perfect merits of their Redeemer ; and that his own seed, the fruits of the blood of the great Sacrifice, shall more especially and devotedly serve the God of their salvation, and be accounted by Him as his chosen generation : for they above all others shall come before his Presence, shall fall down low on their knees before his footstool ; shall adore their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier ; until the heavens, the opening and embracing heavens, shall declare unto them his righteousness ; even unto successive generations of a people who shall be born anew unto the Lord ; them whom the Lord hath made the heirs of grace and glory.

P S A L M 23.

This Psalm, following immediately upon that which we have just concluded, is so rich in its expression of thankful feelings, so beautiful in the imagination of appropriate images, that we can consider it only an effusion of devout gratitude, under David's contemplation of the wonders of grace, which God had wrought for him among the myriads of the ransomed who it was foretold should come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. He speaks in his own person throughout, and revels as it were in the fertile and sunny landscape, which his contemplative genius had created for its own enjoyment. It can be regarded only as one brief hymn of overflowing joy and gratitude.

Ver. 1—6. The humble son of Jesse, who afterwards by God's especial choice became the anointed king of Israel, had himself been a shepherd: and still true to those feelings and imaginations which had occupied his youthful mind, while tending his father's flock in Bethlehem, he here contemplates himself as a lamb of Christ's flock, needing the most watchful care, liable to stray into the thorny paths of error, and demanding the powerful controul of divine grace and authority, to guide his soul in the narrow way of peace and safety. But in the history of David, as related in the first Book of Samuel, it is told that immediately after the anointing, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Him from that day forward. How the continued influence of that Spirit acted upon him in the more advanced periods of his life, the Book of Psalms will ever remain an imperishable record. And the portion of it we are now considering manifests that abiding piety of the heart, which is kept alive only by the power of the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of spiritual life. The son of Jesse, the king of Israel, no sooner turns from the contemplation of the glorious manifestation of divine love, commemorated in the preceding Psalm, and its happy effects upon the countless generations yet for to come; than he retires, as it were, into himself, meditates on his own share in the ample provision made for the universal salvation; and breaks forth in the expression of his boundless confidence, with those strains of poetic feeling, so natural to one who had dreamed away his boyhood's years in the liberty of the verdant meadows, and among the sheep-folds:—The Lord is my Shepherd: therefore can I lack nothing: He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort. It would be unjust to suppose that this warm effusion of grateful confidence was applied chiefly to his experience of temporal bounties, though it is expressive of a strong faith in their continued supply, from the one Source of all our blessings. A higher object manifests itself, as occupying the

devotional spirit of the Psalmist. He shall convert my soul, He shall reprove my wanderings, He shall direct my future goings, and shall bring me forth in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake. For even should I blindly stray into and through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. I know that He neither slumbers nor sleeps, that his watchful care will preserve or recal me from error and danger: for He is ever with me; his rod and his staff comfort me; the one with the assurance of his guardianship, the other with the promise of his guidance. For He hath already spread before me of the plenteousness of his stores; with the oil of gladness hath He crowned my days; and He will give me to drink of the rivers of his pleasures for evermore. Surely his goodness and mercy shall follow me! Thus, my brethren, should our experience of the never-failing bounty of our Heavenly Father, and of the exhaustless grace of Christ, the Shepherd of our souls, inspire us with immoveable confidence. This will insure the endeavour at least, on our part, to make that return of obedience to the divine laws, and submission to the divine will, which is the only requirement of his creatures imposed on the part of our Creator and Redeemer. Then may we hope to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever: those blessed mansions of life and light, where we shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more: For the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed us, and lead us to living fountains of water.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE IX.

PSALM 24.

Much of the value of these sacred Poems arises from our knowledge of the occasions on which they were written; for from this knowledge we obtain a clearer understanding of them. After the Philistines had taken the Ark of the Lord in battle, and had suffered all the plagues inflicted upon them by the divine anger, as referred to in the Lecture on Psalm 78, they voluntarily surrendered it, with an acknowledgment of the God of the Hebrews, by the gift of a trespass-offering. It was then placed in the house of Abinadab at Kirjath-jearim, whose son Eleazar was sanctified to keep it. Here it rested for the space of twenty years, after which David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand; and went with them to bring up from thence the Ark of God to the city of David, where he had pitched for it a tent. And he spoke to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be singers with the instruments: and thus all Israel brought up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, with shouting, and with the sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, and making a noise with psalteries and harps; David himself being clothed with a robe of fine linen, and the ephod on his breast. This Psalm of rejoicing and praise was written for that great occasion; which being deemed a type of Christ's ascension into heaven, the Psalm is adopted among those used in our Church, to commemorate the day of Messiah's final triumph over death and the powers of darkness.

Ver. 1—6. The first portion of this sacred hymn is purely preceptive; consisting of matters of truth, which, in his character of prophet, priest, and king of Israel, David felt bound to impress upon the minds of his people, on this joyous but solemn occasion. He remembers it was by the mysterious exercise of Jehovah's power upon the foes of Israel, that the Ark of the Covenant had been preserved from violation during its long continuance in their possession, namely seven months; during which they were plagued with divers diseases, and sundry kinds of death, until even their hardened hearts were turned to that semblance of repentance which is induced by fear: for their priests and soothsayers said unto the people, "Wherefore should

ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts: for when the God of the Israelites wrought wonderfully among them, did not the Egyptians let them go?" And the grateful king of Israel reminds his people of the omnipotence of Jehovah, by reason of his right as Creator of all things; not only of the fabric of the world, but of every creature that inhabits it. Who then, he asks, shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord? that holy place in which they were now about to deposit the Ark that God had commanded Moses to make from the offerings of the children of Israel, as related in the 25th of Exodus; and in which was deposited the Testimony of the Covenant given by the Almighty to his chosen people. Thus was the hill of Zion sanctified by the emblem of the Divine Presence, and set apart as the place where God's honour should dwell. The Psalmist then replies to his own proposition, as to who shall be counted worthy to approach this sacred place, by shewing that only the undefiled and the pure in heart shall be admitted to the spiritual benefits of this Covenant: for this was a Covenant of works. Nevertheless, he is not unmindful, nor does he neglect to remind his people, that their obedience is but the means whereby they shall obtain grace, and not constituting their absolute title to glory. For that, it is of his free mercy that they shall receive the blessing from the Lord; and righteousness, that is, imputed righteousness, from the God of their salvation. It is from the magnificent chorus of this instructive hymn, that we derive our authority to apply it to the exaltation of the Saviour, when He re-ascended into heaven, leading captivity captive, and about to claim and to receive those inestimable gifts for men, which He had purchased on earth, by a life of perfect obedience, and by the shedding of his own most precious blood for the sins of the whole world. As the Ark was the type of the Heavenly Jerusalem, so was the testimony it contained a shadow of the good things to come, by means of that more gracious Covenant, which, though it had been a sealed book from

everlasting, was then about to be opened to make known the Gospel of grace and peace, that the faithful of all generations may find joy and peace in believing. The Evangelists have given the simplest possible narratives of our Saviour's doings, sufferings, and exaltation; and this is the most fitting style for the detail of facts, however important the consequences to which they lead. But the Psalmist, in the spirit of poetry and prophecy, has recorded his vision of the Ascension, as if he himself had penetrated to the gates of the heavenly mansions, and was calling upon the blest inmates to open the everlasting doors, that the Lord of Life and Glory might come in. [Read 7—10.]

PSALM 25.

The number of the verses of this Psalm corresponds with the number of letters in the Hebrew Alphabet; and this order is preserved in our Bible translation: but in our Prayer Book the first and second form but one. The character of the whole Psalm, however, savours greatly of penitence and prayer, and admits the conjecture that it was written in a time of national affliction, probably under the rebellion of Absalom, as the concluding verse is a petition in behalf of all Israel. The whole Psalm, indeed, is an alternation of personal and of general prayer, with an intermixture of reflective piety.

Ver. 1—4. This opening of the Psalm plainly indicates the presence of some severe affliction, whatever may have been its nature; and from the contemplation of which, the sufferer seems by his language to have suddenly aroused himself to a remembrance of the efficacy of his prayers in past times of trial; and to resolve again and again to cast himself upon the faithfulness of Jehovah, for the peculiar protection and deliverance of which he and his people now stood in need. We must not, brethren, cavil at the great similarity of sentiment and subject which prevails in so large a portion of these sacred compositions: for if we study the life of the son of Jesse, as written in the two Books of Samuel, and accompany him from

the sheep-folds to the throne, and through all the trials which marked the period of his greatness; we shall be constrained to admit, that David's experience of the changes and chances of this mortal life is unequalled by that of any monarch whose name adorns the history of the world. But amidst all these vicissitudes, the pervading piety of David's spirit sustained him; and to that we owe the sublime record of his feelings, under so many changes. In his present extremity, whatever it was, he at once resolves for the future, and appeals, humbly, but confidently, to the Searcher of hearts, upon the past:—Unto Thee, O Lord, will I lift up my soul: my God, I have put my trust in Thee. Does any one here present know the blessedness of being able thus to lay open his heart to God? He then, under any experience of affliction, whether of the mind or body, whether spiritual or arising from mere worldly causes, may turn towards the Mercy Seat in the sure and certain hope that his prayer will be heard. O let me not be confounded before Thee, O Lord, by the consciousness of my own unworthiness of the least of thy blessings; neither let the outward enemies of my peace triumph over me! And herein lies the value of these minute records of a good man's feelings and practice: they are preserved to us for an example of godly life; which consists not in ostentatious professions, or plausible shew of piety, in the use of language which is too sacred for every-day use, too hallowed to be made familiar to our tongue as household words. The Psalmist could not have penned his own thoughts from day to day, with any feeling of the vanity of authorship; much less with the expectation that through a period of three thousand years they would be written for our learning, and for the instruction of future generations to the end of time—for that is unquestionably their glorious destiny! No—the great body of the Psalmody of David is a written record of private prayers and thanksgivings; but their exalted character, and the high position of their Author, as being at once the most

talented, and the most devoted monarch to the service of his God, and to the prudently ruling of his people, that ever sat upon the throne of Israel, forbid that they should be shut out from "gathered wisdom of *ten* thousand years." We see in the practice of David a bright illustration of that sublime thought of an author of our own days, that "a written prayer is a prayer of faith; special, sure, and to be answered."* But the petitions of the sweet Psalmist of Israel are ever founded upon confidence in his God: All they that hope in Thee shall not be ashamed.

Ver. 5—10. In these verses, after the personal petition, David goes on in the reflective style. He calls upon God only for the exercise of that great attribute to which we all owe, not only the inestimable gift of the means of grace, but also our hope of eternal glory, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord—Call to remembrance, O Lord, thy tender mercies: Oh remember not the offences of my youth; but according to thy mercy think Thou upon me! This prayer is no sooner uttered and recorded, than he falls into reflection upon the general character of the Deity, as exemplified in his own experience; and the repentant sinner then turns to the admonitions and reproaches of his own conscience: For Thy Name's sake, O Lord, be merciful unto *my* sin, for it is great! It is supposed that in this and in the 6th verse of the Psalm, David refers to his deep guilt in the matter of Uriah; and this confirms the opinion that the Psalm was written during the unnatural rebellion of Absalom; for though he was not the son of Bathsheba, he was the offspring of one of those numerous alliances which David formed in his day of sensual indulgence. But it is not recorded that he committed the sin of adultery in any other case than that of the wife of Uriah; which cannot be palliated by ourselves, when we remember that

* Tupper's Proverbial Philosophy, 1838.

it was accompanied by the murder of a faithful servant: and we may therefore suppose that it weighed heavily upon the sensitive conscience of David. But such is the frailty of man.

Ver. 11—13. The Psalmist has elsewhere declared that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and here he shews what are its progressive benefits; namely, that the Holy Spirit Himself shall teach the humble disciple the way that he shall choose; that is, the way he must choose, in order to attain to that happiness, which is the end and aim of his being; including the promise of temporal peace, and of its being prolonged even to his seed after him; through the knowledge of that great secret of the Lord, wherein, as in the Ark of the Sanctuary of old, is deposited the Covenant of Mercy and Grace wrought from everlasting, for our final redemption from the penalties of original and actual guilt.

Ver. 14—21. This remainder of the Psalm consists of petitions for pardon and continued grace, introduced by a firm profession of faith in being delivered from the fears and perils by which David's consciousness of his own transgressions had surrounded him. His adversity and misery he traces to the hand of God, as provoked by his own sin; and to that hand alone he looks for deliverance from the many enemies, who are the permitted instruments and agents of the divine anger; but against whose tyrannous hatred he prays to be protected; that henceforth his life may manifest in the sight of men his perfectness and righteous dealing. But the Psalmist does not confine his thoughts to his own personal sufferings; the happiness and safety of his country and his people have their share in his prayers. Deliver Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

PSALM 26.

This is unquestionably one of the Psalmist's own compositions; but the application of its language to David himself, or to the Messiah, is an unsettled point. Some Commentators think, and perhaps justly, that its language is too confident to have

been appropriated by the Psalmist to himself; and that it is therefore only boldly prophetic of the inward feelings of Him who knew no guile. It is nevertheless a powerful call to the Christian duty of self-examination, with a view to repentance and self-correction, as the means of purifying the heart of those desires, which forbid its presumptuous appeal to the God of the spirits of all flesh, on the ground of its innocency, its faithfulness, or its obedience. To this purpose, therefore, I will endeavour to apply the Psalm before us.

Ver. 1—3. Here is evidence of a very weighty character, that however by reason of our frailty we may fall into occasional sin, yet that as the Lord is not extreme to mark what is done amiss, we may, under the consciousness of general integrity, and freedom from habitual vice, or besetting sins, lay open our hearts before Him in reliance upon his forbearance and final forgiveness. For He knoweth our thoughts long before they have ripened into action; and who among us can say, I have made my heart clean; I am pure from sin? Yet if our conscience condemn us not of a desperate yielding to the allurements of the world, the flesh, and the devil, our safety and consolation lie in an appeal to the God of all mercies, the Judge of the whole earth, with a comparatively utter disregard of the judgment of our fellow sinners. Such was the conviction of St. Paul:—With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. He that judgeth me is the Lord. This was also the Psalmist's appeal—Be Thou my judge, O Lord. Examine me, and prove me: try out my reins and my heart. But on what does this confidence rest? on his experience of the inexhaustible goodness of Him, to whom belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him: for thy loving-kindness, saith the Psalmist, is ever before mine eyes.

Ver. 4—8. It is upon the plainest reasoning that the Apostle founds his caution to those who profess and call themselves Christians, that they hold no intimacy with the ungodly; for “what fellowship,” he asks, “hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? What

concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth, with an infidel? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord."—Much less of evil would prevail in the world, if this precept were more generally observed by such as really do endeavour to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. For not only is it true, that as evil communications lead to the corruption of good manners, the comparatively virtuous do thereby expose their principles to the danger of contamination; but also, that their habitual separation of themselves from the society of the infidel and the profane may operate as a practical rebuke, and thus help to produce the shame which might be effective in turning the evil from the error of their ways. This wise caution the Psalmist professes to have observed, and he speaks with a determination on the matter which should be exemplary:—I have not dwelt with vain persons, neither will I have fellowship with the deceitful. I have hated the congregation of the wicked, and will not sit among the ungodly. On the contrary part he professes his deep love for the Sanctuary of the Lord, as the place wherein the Divine Honour dwelleth; and where he may purify his thoughts, and nourish his faith, and obtain grace and strength to help him in time of need; acknowledging, that the true preparation for the reception of these blessings, is to wash his hands in innocency, and so to go unto the altar of the Lord.

Ver. 9, 10. Yet it appears from this conclusion, that David depended not upon his own strength, but on the protecting power of God's Holy Spirit, to keep him undefiled by the influence or example of sinners, the wicked and the bloodthirsty, in whose hands are the gifts of corruption; that is, the means whereby they endeavour to corrupt others. With this cautious resolve to submit all our goings and doings to Him, who notwithstanding our undeservings still careth for us, it were well, brethren, if we could proceed onward in our destined course on

the earth: for without the divine aid we have not the strength even to resolve that we will take heed to our ways; much less to carry out our resolutions to good effect. And herein we have the example of one far more righteous than ourselves—even the man after God's own heart—who thus mingles his vows with prayer, and in answer to his prayer is inspired with the confidence, that as the Lord is his strength, so he shall not be permitted greatly to fall. [Read 11, 12.]

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE X.

PSALM 27.

The sacred writer opens this composition with a bold avowal of his entire dependence on the guidance and deliverance of the Almighty arm, in the midst of the terrors and tumults of war; when probably the holy city and its temple were threatened by besieging foes; for such was often the condition of Jerusalem before its final overthrow. But the Psalmist forgets not the efficacy of prayer, as a means of establishing and supporting his avowed confidence; nor, while making a profession of his faith, does he neglect the ministerial duty of exhorting others to the exercise of a trustful patience, under their own personal trials.

Ver. 1. Faith in divine protection, wherever it exists, will occasionally manifest itself in some strong expression of the lips. Thus it was displayed equally, and in similar language, by David and by Paul. The apostle's words are, If God be for us, who can be against us? The importance to ourselves of seeking the gift of faith, (for it is to be obtained only of God, by prayer,) is little thought of in the world. Yet all, at some time or other, experience those visitations, in which the light that is thrown by faith on the all-protecting shield of the Almighty and all-merciful God, can alone give assurance of final peace and safety. In those times then, how pitiable are they who possess not this great gift of God, this refuge against the terrors of despair!

Ver. 2, 3. It was the Psalmist's consolation, and the ground of his strong confidence, that he had passed through many and severe trials, and had been rescued from them all. And this should not be recorded for us in vain. Of what value is the protective weapon which has perhaps saved our life in past perils, if in the prospect of new danger we have no confidence in its usefulness? So then may we learn, from God's mercies experienced, to trust Him for mercies needed.

Ver. 4—7. And the true way to acquire that confidence, is to hold that sort of communion with God, which it is the very

end and aim of all the public services of the Sanctuary to promote and encourage. For in these we are constantly reminded of our duty towards God as his dependent creatures; and that duty cannot be fulfilled in any acceptable degree, if we eschew these means of grace, and forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. For this reason the Psalmist's desire is, that he may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life; that is, that his thoughts, like the face of Daniel in his captivity, may ever turn towards the holy place, even when not present there in the body: for while his thoughts dwelt there, he felt that he was an object not only of the providential care, but of the free grace of God; and that he would be not only protected, but honoured and exalted. Therefore does the Psalmist resolve there to offer his sacrifices of prayer and praise.

Ver. 8—15. But the sacrifice of prayer is always predominant in the acts and resolutions of the pious king of Israel. And the burthen of his prayer is not for mere temporal good, but for spiritual blessing—the true object of all prayer. He appeals to the Searcher of hearts in testimony of his sincerity—My heart hath talked of Thee: and when Thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. This translation of the passage, as given in our Bible, is more clear than that which I have just read to you. And after this the Psalmist confesses again, as in the second verse, that the foundation of his present hope is his past experience—Thou hast been my succour: and when my earthly friends and relatives have been removed, or have deserted me, the Lord taketh me up. This confession again leads him into prayer: and as if conscious of too earnest or too frequent importunity, he alludes, by way of apology, to the existence of adversaries from whose falsehood and wrong he could appeal only to Him who knoweth our thoughts long before: for he acknowledges that he should utterly have fainted under the terror of their active maliciousness against him, but that he believed to see the good-

ness of the Lord in the land of the living: that is, not waiting for the hour of his final salvation; but still hoping that while yet upon the earth, he should see, as he had seen, the manifest tokens of the divine love and care for him.

Ver. 16. In these few words is the substance of a long discourse. How few are there, who in the time of outward trouble, or of bodily anguish, can submit to the wholesome discipline of patience? Yet, for the want of it, how much do they increase the pangs of whatever trouble or uneasiness they labour under! And how justly is this punishment inflicted upon the spirit, that is rebellious under God's dispensations—for such they are, whatever be their distinguishing character. Trouble cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth sorrow spring out of the ground: it is the will of our Heavenly Father, who correcteth only to amend, who chasteneth only to heal. In all our sufferings the exhortation of the Psalmist is of the highest value, as the truest remedy yet offered to the heirs of pain. Tarry thou the Lord's leisure: be strong in faith, strong in bearing your lot, strong in the assurance that deliverance is yet at hand; be strong, and He shall comfort thine heart: and put thou thy trust in the Lord; for in his hands are all the issues of life and death, of time and eternity: moreover, brethren, keep in mind the apostolical precept, that whether we live or die, we are the Lord's: we are not our own, we are bought with a price; and that price has been paid down at the foot of the cross, for our redemption from eternal sorrow and suffering.

PSALM 28.

It has been conjectured that this Psalm was penned exclusively to typify our Saviour's sorrows and sufferings, as well as his intercession for the Church. But there appears on the face of it no strong reason for this opinion: it may be applied without impropriety to the earthly condition of the Man of Sorrows: yet it is evident, from the strength of the language of the Psalm, that it was prompted by the intense suffering or apprehension of danger, then agitating the mind, and stirring up the spirit of the writer, to utter his cry towards the mercy-seat, under the terrors of present or approaching evil. He is not however, selfish in his sorrows: he forgets not the appeal to God for blessings upon his people Israel, whom he calls the Lord's inheritance.

Ver. 1—6. It is evident from the concluding verses of this passage, that the pious monarch was in a state of great fear, if not of despondency; and from the general tenor of his complaint it may be suggested, that he was suffering from the malice of some internal foes; such disturbers of the common peace as we have in our day, under the various names of repealers, liberals, leaguers, universal-suffrage-men, and others; or else that his private and personal enemies had been so active and successful in slandering his name and his actions, that he could find no ground of hope, but in prayer, and an humble appeal to the merciful protection of his God. For he earnestly calls upon Him to reward them according to their deeds; to recompense them after the work of their own hands; to pay them that they have deserved. It is not always, my brethren, that we can limit our thoughts to these just bounds, when we pray or only hope for vengeance on those who persecute us. Every offence against the law of Christian charity is obnoxious to the divine justice; and we may well rest in the quiet assurance that no such offence will pass for ever unpunished, though we see not the lash of justice inflicted under our eyes. But we cannot all pray with the deep fervour of the Psalmist, who seems in the following portion of this Psalm to have had his desire upon his enemies, at least so far as to have been himself delivered out of their power.

Ver. 7—9. It is this last word, probably, which has given strength to the opinion of some commentators, that this Psalm is exclusively descriptive of the Redeemer's sufferings and exaltation. But it must be remembered that David was the anointed king of Israel. There is therefore no impropriety in his thus speaking of himself, when praising God for his own rescue from the power of his enemies. "Praised be the Lord, for He hath heard the voice of my humble petition. He is my strength and my shield; my heart hath trusted in Him, and I am helped." This is the language of simple gratitude, as it will

be cherished in all our hearts, if with the consciousness that for every escape from threatened danger, and every deliverance from present and positive evil, we have also the grace to confess it to be of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed. For it is most true that in all the injustice and wrong we may suffer from others, the actors are those who regard not in their mind the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands: the righteous therefore may confidently leave them to that just judgment which will reward them according to their deeds; will pay them that they have deserved.

Ver. 10. David was at once the prophet, priest, and king of his people; and in this three-fold dignity we see, not only in his personal character as recorded in the Old Testament, but in his public capacity, as well as in this unrivalled production of the sacred Muse, the Book of Psalms, that what he owed to the people in his priestly office was always uppermost in his thoughts, always the feeling which prevailed in his heart. And herein is he an example to the Christian priesthood, worthy of their emulation. But, my brethren, every minister who is faithful to his calling and profession, has too much reason to lament over his unprofitableness, rather than over his own want of zeal in the service of his fellow-men. I accuse no one, I preach at no one; but I refer you to your own hearts for the reasons—and they are many—why it is that *there* is only so much—I say not, so little—but *only* so much of the religion that is *felt*, while there is on all hands such an universal profession and outward shew?

PSALM 29.

This is a magnificent summary of the visible attributes of God, as displayed in his providential works; and of the evidences of his power, as manifested in the effects of His Word in the world and in his Church. The Psalm opens with an authoritative command to all the mighty rulers of the earth to worship God in his holiness, to praise him in the firmament of his power. It calls upon them to bring

their offerings to the Lord of the choicest things at their command, according to the usages of the Israelitish church, and it plainly implies an exhortation to the more spiritual worship of the heart, from even the kings and princes of the world.

Ver. 1, 2. It is only in a figurative sense that young rams are required of the rich and powerful as their offering to the Lord, and in compliance with the observances of the ceremonial law. The language of the All-merciful Father to the children of his love is, My son, give me thine heart. Then it is that his creatures are prompted and enabled to ascribe unto the Lord worship and strength; to give the Lord the honour due unto his Name; and to worship Him with holy worship. The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world has by his sacrifice abolished the offerings of worldly wealth, save in deeds of charity, as propitiatory sin-offerings. Nor would I be understood to say that the works of charity are propitiatory, though acceptable to Him who demands them as an evidence of our faith and allegiance. But it is that faith which is rooted in the heart, and springs forth from thence, bearing the fruit of good works, which is the prominent condition in our part of the New Covenant. This is the offering of a sweet savour which only will now be accepted, instead of the blood of animals, once required to be slain and offered upon the Jewish altars, typically of the great sacrifice of the Son of God, who would come to offer an atonement for the sins of all mankind.

Ver. 3—9. This eloquent enumeration of the visible effects produced by Almighty Power, under the figurative term, the voice of the Lord, is at once minute and comprehensive. We are all more or less acquainted with the appalling power of the elements, when put in motion by the Creator and ruler of them all. In different climates, however, they usually operate with different degrees of force. For instance, the Psalmist speaks of their power as making the mountains of Libanus and Sirion skip like a young calf. The earthquake we can understand to be a most awful example of the Divine Power; and we can

scarcely imagine how it can ever be exhibited, but as a token of Divine Wrath; since it almost always involves a wide destruction of human life, and a lasting infliction of misery upon the neighbouring survivors. Mountainous countries are chiefly liable to these visitations; because the very element which probably was the moving cause in forming those great inequalities on the earth's surface, namely, subterraneous fire, is still in existence, and always in active operation; and in the progress of time the resistance of the earth's weight above it, in certain portions of the globe, is not enough to confine the powerful element beneath; and the consequence is, an awful trembling and heaving of the earth, which sometimes moves to and fro, like the waves of the sea; at other times is rent asunder; the mountains leap as it were from their strong foundations; human labours are crumbled together, as the dust of the ant-hill under our feet; and, like the little insects which have raised it, man, the creature formed in the image of God, is whelmed by thousands in the gaping chasms and pits of the earth; these again closing upon them for ever, and forming at the same moment their death-bed and their sepulchre. Let us not, however, ascribe to the creature the power which belongs only to the Creator. Fire is but the agent of the Divine Will; for as the Psalmist teaches, it is the voice of the Lord that divideth the flames of fire which He hath created as a part of the natural economy of this lower world. And we are told moreover that God Himself is a consuming fire. And, beyond this, we are forewarned that in the last great day, the day of the Lord, which will come as a thief in the night, the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Let us not, however, overlook in all this, that the Psalmist ascribes all the tremendous effects upon the visible world, which he enumerates, to the voice of the Lord, that is, to his omnipotent Word; and though we witness not his wonders to that extent in which He

hath displayed them in past ages and in distant lands; we have his written Word, the still small voice of his love, wherein all his attributes are unfolded to our sight, and whereby we are taught, that if we labour not to deserve his love, we must abide his insupportable wrath. And who shall stand in his sight when He is angry? Who shall abide the blasting of the breath of his displeasure? For if our hearts tremble, if our frail bodies are shaken by the voice of his thunder, by the terrors of his lightnings, when He bringeth the winds out of his treasures, or when He causeth his waters to overwhelm us;—how will our undying spirits stand in his immediate Presence, quivering under the consciousness of having throughout a long life-time turned a deaf ear to his Word, slunned his Sabbaths, despised his ordinances, given ourselves up to every pursuit, every object of desire, forbidden in his holy commandments, and laden ourselves with the thick clay of unrepented sins? For then shall we find, that not only over the elements that controul by his command the course of this perishable world, but also over our immortal souls, the Lord remaineth a King for ever.

Ver. 10. Here, however, we are recalled from our contemplation of the terrors of an offended God to the less fearful attribute of his in-dwelling mercy and goodness towards his frail and wandering creatures: for as in the hour of their present need He giveth strength unto his people; so shall He give them the inexhaustible blessings of peace eternal in those many mansions above, which have been provided and are promised by Him who is the Living Word, the Word that is with God, the Word that is God—even our Saviour Christ!—Amen.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XI.

PSALM 30.

Much confusion and contrariety of opinion prevail among Expositors, touching the occasion of this Psalm; one leaning to the notion that it was written by David on the dedication of his house; another interpreting it as an act of legal purification, on his restoration to his house, after subduing the rebellion of Absalom; and others again adopting the more rational, because more obvious interpretation, that it was after his recovery from some severe and dangerous bodily affliction, this Psalm was composed, as a thanksgiving; whether to be offered in his own domestic circle, or in the House of the Lord, on his first subsequent return to public worship. The language of the Psalm certainly indicates this to be its object, rather than either of the others which have been surmised.

Ver. 1—3. If any thing in our earthly experience can awaken in us the spirit of grateful adoration; the escape from peril, whether by sickness or mischance, appeals forcibly alike to our sensibilities and to our reason, in prompting us to this duty. There is, in spite of the deep convictions of our immortality impressed by religious instruction, and by the secret and silent influences of the Holy Spirit on our hearts, encouraging hope, and faith, and confidence—there is an unconquerable dread of death, forming a part and parcel of our mortal nature, which is so far paramount in the time of sickness and danger, that the heart must be indeed hardened, which does not acknowledge the deliverance from this peril to be the work of divine mercy. The memorable instance of the good king Hezekiah, when he was sick unto death, is a strong case in proof, that even the most righteous of God's servants are not always free from the terror of the last mysterious enemy. For in his sickness, though deeply conscious of his own integrity in the sight

of his Creator and Judge, he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord: I beseech Thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. On his recovery, however, he committed to writing his vow of thanksgiving, which is preserved to this day. (*Isaiah xxxviii.*) Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: the Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord. The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known thy truth. Here we see the pious king following the example of his great predecessor on the throne of Israel. For his language is similar in purport to that of the Psalmist; which is a warm acknowledgment that it was of the Lord's mercy he had not been consumed. In each case also these devout exemplars of a grateful spirit call upon others to unite with them in the duty of praise.

Ver. 4, 5. Every instance of the Divine Goodness manifested in our sight, though others may be the immediate subjects of it, calls for our united acknowledgments and praises. For herein is the fulfilment of one branch at least of the apostolical precept, to rejoice with them that do rejoice, being of the same mind one towards another. David here enlarges his exhortation to his people to give thanks unto the Lord for a remembrance of his holiness, by endeavouring to infuse into their minds a good hope, under whatever corrections it may please the Lord to chasten them withal, and by reminding them of the all-prevailing attribute of mercy; for whereas if they are afflicted, his anger is only for a brief season, which is compared to the twinkling of an eye; but that in his pleasure, that is, in his returning goodness or favour towards them, there is life, with all its accompaniments of hope and peace, and joy

and confidence: affliction may befall them in the night, when their soul may best gird itself for the conflict with pain, or sickness, or sorrow, as more free from the operation of external influences: but joy cometh in the morning of their renewed existence; when all visible and all perceptible objects around them shall minister to their delight, proclaiming the faithfulness, the goodness, the bounty of their Creator and Preserver. This passage of the Psalm is thus beautifully paraphrased by a gifted Poet of our own country:—

Grief for a night, obtrusive guest!
 Beneath our roof perchance may rest:
 But Joy with the returning day
 Shall wipe each transient tear away!

Ver. 6—13. Here the Psalmist humbly confesses what were his proud feelings in the days of his prosperity; when he thought his fortunes were as unchangeable as Mount Sion, which should never be removed. But he now saw the vanity of his overstrained confidence, and how weak are the hopes and strength of man, unless they are sustained by the Almighty Will. This was manifested in the change of his condition, the feebleness of his prostrate powers: for, Thou didst turn thy face from me, and I was troubled. Then I humbled myself before Thee: then I reasoned myself into a renewed dependence on thy returning mercy; for what profit is there in my destruction? how shall I serve or praise Thee in the grave? how shall my dissolving body acknowledge thy goodness, or declare thy truth? Therefore was I encouraged to renew my prayer—Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me: Lord, be Thou my helper! And he gratefully records the success of his prayer: Thou hast turned my heaviness into joy: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness. Although these expressions are figurative and poetical, their meaning is too plain to require explanation. The Psalmist concludes with the natural reflection, that under the experience of similar mercies, every good

man will habitually, as well as at all particular seasons of rejoicing, render his praise to the Giver of all good: leaving us in his own ardent vow an example to stir up our minds by way of remembrance of the claims of our Heavenly Father upon our grateful adoration: O my God, I will give thanks unto Thee for ever!

PSALM 31.

In this, as in the 54th and 109th Psalms, David prostrates himself in prayer under that great peril he sustained, while hiding himself from the malice of Saul and his followers, and it is supposed to have been written or conceived in the cave of Engedi, after his escape from Keilah, and from the desert of Maon. Yet though these several Psalms are thought to have been prompted by the same occasion, there is a variety in their terms, which indicates either that his thoughts took their colouring from divine inspiration, or were moulded to different forms of expression by the powers of his own genius. Here also, as in other Psalms, the sufferings and humiliation of Christ are prefigured: and St. Luke has recorded the 6th verse as the last words uttered by Him on the cross.

Ver. 1—5. In considering these verses as exclusively applicable to the case of David himself, amidst imminent perils; the force and propriety of the terms employed are strikingly obvious, when taken in connexion with the nature of the dangers then surrounding him, and the localities which had afforded him protection. After humbly supplicating the attention of the Almighty, on the plea that he had in all his extremities put his trust in the Lord, his thoughts seem to take their character from the scenes which he had passed: Be Thou my strong rock, and house of defence, that Thou mayest save me. He had found temporary shelter in the cave of Adullam, in the strong holds of the wilderness of Ziph, and in the cave of Engedi—these had been each, for a time, his houses of defence: and a mountain in the wilderness of Maon had been to him a protecting rock in his extreme danger; when Saul there pur-

sued after David, he and his host going on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side; and when these owed their deliverance, under God, to the providential timely invasion of Saul's dominions by the Philistines: wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David. Herein we trace more plainly the propriety of the figures of language employed by the Psalmist in his supplication—Be Thou my strong rock and house of defence! Nor are the remaining sentences of this portion less appropriate. Be Thou also my guide, and lead me: draw me out of the net that they have laid privily for me. The wanderings of the fugitive were yet far from being accomplished, and he needed the guidance of that faithful arm which had safely conducted him through so many perilous adventures. His enemies still were spreading their toils around his supposed path; they were foolishly devising how they might ensnare him whom God had determined to deliver. These scenes were therefore prevalent in the thoughts of the son of Jesse; and, as I have said, they imparted their colouring to the language of his prayer: Be Thou also my guide, and lead me for Thy Name's sake: draw me out of the net that they have laid privily for me; for Thou art my strength. A lesson of some value may be gathered from the style of this prayer alone. Few are gifted in any degree proportionate to the talent bestowed on the Psalmist; yet thousands are puffed up with the vain conceit that their own outpourings of their own spirit, though it be the spirit of pride and arrogance, are far preferable, in the ear of the Almighty, to even the records of divine inspiration. For such are the Psalms of David; and of all other written productions of human agency, they are most copious in such thoughts and aspirations as become the humble Christian in his approach to the mercy seat of our Heavenly Father. No wonder, then, that they who are thus wise in their own conceit should turn their backs upon the established ordinances and prescribed Liturgy of our Church. But, brethren, for your safety, and for the

preservation of your stedfastness, I remind you that it has been acknowledged by the most learned, the wisest, and the most truly pious among the ministers of Dissent, that of all the productions of mere human wisdom, not pretending to the aid of inspiration, the authorized prayers of the Church of England are the most comprehensive, and the best adapted to the necessities of all sorts and conditions of men, of any collection of written divinity, after the Holy Scriptures themselves. Numerous as are our actual wants, various as are our sanctified, that is, permitted desires, and needy as is our spiritual condition, hemmed in as we are by a corrupt nature; in our Book of Common Prayer there are none of these which are not provided for. This Book is a treasure committed to us in common, by the united exercise of Divine Grace and Divine Providence to assist us in working out our common salvation: and it is a question which we ought all to be able to answer to our self-satisfaction—"If we have such a talent committed to our trust, have we been duly careful in the employment of it?"*

Ver. 6. It is considered proof there was no contrivance, no concert or co-operation between the Evangelists in writing the several Gospels, that each one records some circumstance of our Saviour's life which is not noticed by the rest. In the several accounts of his dying hour there is a striking difference. St. Matthew and St. Mark report another passage taken from the 22nd Psalm, as our Lord's last words—My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? but both recording, that when He had cried *again* with a loud voice, He gave up the ghost. St. John relates that when Jesus had received the vinegar offered to Him, He said, It is finished: and He bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. St. Luke alone ascribes to our Saviour the use of the words of this 31st Psalm—Into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Nor is there any impropriety in applying the con-

* Pinder, on the Liturgy.

cluding words of the verse to the Man Christ in his last agony, when his great work was about to be "finished," and Himself about to experience the fulfilment of the prophecy, that He should see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied: Thou hast redeemed Me, O Lord, Thou God of Truth! Though the application of the preceding words to Christ is fully justified by his memorable use of them, we must here consider them as the expression of the pious resignation of the Psalmist in his extreme distress: and on their obvious fitness for the occasion no comment is needed.

Ver. 7—9. We frequently find in the reflective passages of the Psalms very strong expressions of David's abhorrence of all evil ways, and not seldom, as in this place, an avowed hatred of the evil actors. This is nature, and is not always to be restrained; but is on the contrary strongest with those who have the deepest sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin; who can truly say with David, My trust hath been in the Lord; who can rejoice in his mercy, having experienced it in trouble and in adversity. He had known and gratefully acknowledges many deliverances; and the particular phrase with which this passage concludes, refers probably to his most recent escapes from peril, while wandering in the wilderness of Maon:—Thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy, but hast set my feet in a large room.

Ver. 10—15. It must be observed throughout the Psalms, that no complaint is uttered without the suitable accompaniment of prayer. And this offers an impressive lesson. For while on the one hand, the indulgence of a spirit of murmuring and discontent with our earthly lot is utterly at variance with the profession of the Christian faith; we are nowhere forbidden to make our complaints known unto God, as the moving principle of our prayers to Him, and of our trust in Him, when all human help is vain. It is not necessary to enlarge upon the particulars of David's sorrows, as recorded in this passage:

they were peculiar to his own experience. The value of the record lies in the usefulness of his example in our times of any kind of affliction; and is further recommended by the apostolic precept:—In every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

Ver. 16—23. Here the Psalmist boldly contrasts his own humble faith with the reckless multitude of foes with whom he had to struggle, renewing his profession of entire trust in the Lord, and enlarging his prolonged prayer with the warmest expressions of adoration and thanksgiving. Had he himself been a dutiful disciple of the great Apostle, he could not have shewn a more perfect obedience to the letter of the precept I have so recently produced, to illustrate the preceding verses of the Psalm. The strong city alluded to in the last of these verses is supposed to have been Keilah, where David had found protection for a season; which was the more “marvellous,” as the people proved treacherous to him, even after he had fought for them, and delivered them from the hands of the Philistines. (1 *Sam.* xxiii.)

Ver. 24—27. Here, as in the 116th Psalm, David confesses to a weakness of faith which had assailed him in some past moment of trial; probably, from the expression used, when in hasty flight from his enemies:—When I made haste I said, I am cast out of the sight of thine eyes! Nevertheless, notwithstanding this faithlessness, Thou heardest the voice of my prayer when I cried unto Thee. For this he expresses the warmth of his own gratitude, by exhorting all his people to a devout reliance upon the Lord—that firm and faithful reliance, which at once proceeds from love, and manifests the depth of that love. He would inspire them with faith, by the assurance, grounded on his own experience, that thus they become special objects of the divine care; while the proud doer, the independent self-willed despiser of supreme protection and guidance, shall be rewarded after his own works; shall be left to the

changeable experience of relying upon his own feeble powers of action and of suffering. But nothing can be more forcible than the reasoning argument of the final appeal to the believing heart:—All ye that put your trust in the Lord, be strong, and He shall establish your heart. There are circumstances in every man's life, under which it is necessary for him to act, as well as to believe and pray. Then it is he needs the courage of the Christian. Be strong, and the Lord shall establish your heart.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XII.

PSALM 32.

This is the second of the seven Penitential Psalms, and in it we may trace a recognition of the doctrine of justification by faith, so finely argued by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, wherein he quotes the two leading verses of the Psalm: for, as an ancient expositor remarks, If any one after Abraham could be justified by his works, David was the man. But the Apostle refers to him as describing the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works: a sincere repentance for past misdeeds being always understood, as the necessary evidence of a true and saving faith.

Ver. 1, 2. The words of St. Paul furnish the best commentary on these verses:—The promise to Abraham, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to him or to his seed through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith: for if they which are of the Law be heirs, then is faith made void, and the promise made of none effect, because the Law worketh wrath; for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed. David explains in a few words the condition on which faith is accepted; namely, that in the spirit of the professing penitent there shall be no guile.

Ver. 3—8. In these sentences is vividly portrayed the anguish of conscious guilt, when the sinner has been awakened to a sense of his past folly, vanity, and vice; and to the horrible dread of divine retribution. The fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, is never so beneficially manifested as when it induces the godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of. (*2 Cor. vii, 10.*) The Apostle, you will observe, speaks of the sorrow that *worketh* repentance; and the language of the Psalmist indicates, that he had too long mused in silence on the occasional reminiscences of his own

weighty sin: mingling them, peradventure, as Nature will do, with mental re-actings of the transient pleasures of sin. But he confesses that while thus tied and bound, the arrows of conscience were festering in his prostrate soul; that it was in vain for him, even among his multitudinous occupations, to apply to it the flattering unction of occasional forgetfulness, saying peace! peace! where there was no peace; that the hand of God lay too heavy upon him day and night, to afford him a hope of escaping the terrors that encompassed him round about. What, then, was his refuge? It was prayer and confession:—I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord; and so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin. This, brethren, it must be allowed, is but a brief description of the process of conversion; but let it not, I pray you, be taken for a warranty of the truth of those instantaneous conversions, which we sometimes hear of from the miracle mongers of Dissent; who can occasionally emulate the pretended powers of the Romish priesthood, when they catch a malleable subject. No—here, in David's case, is the godly sorrow for sins committed, here is the secret repentance working onward towards salvation, here is the open confession of guilt, and here is the fervent prayer for pardon. And for this, says the Psalmist, every one that is godly shall make his prayers unto God in an acceptable time: but reminding us, that there is a limit to the divine forbearance; that in the great water-floods, when the deluge of unrepented sin hath overwhelmed the soul, the cry of the wicked shall not come nigh Him. To every living man therefore it may be said, Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation, even while it is yet called to-day: for it is now only, that the repentant sinner may embrace the privilege vouchsafed to the humbled King of Israel:—Thou (O Lord) art a place to hide me in, Thou shalt preserve me from trouble: Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance; for there *is* joy among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

Ver. 9—12. Here the Almighty Judge is solemnly introduced, encouraging the sinner by his promises of instruction and guidance; warning him against a stubborn perseverance in iniquity; and denouncing his temporal and eternal wrath upon the ungodly. But whoso putteth his trust in the Lord, mercy embraceth him on every side. Wherefore be glad, O ye righteous; be joyful, all ye that are true of heart!

PSALM 33.

This is a highly exultant hymn of praise, of great simplicity in its composition, and adapted to those musical accompaniments, according to the order of singing in the Tabernacle, established by David himself; at least brought to its highest perfection in his day. The entire Psalm is plain and methodical, furnishing matter for meditation, but requiring little explanation. "The style of it is sweet, fluent, temperate, simple, without any poetic flights, and almost devoid of any figurative language."*

Ver. 1—5. In this opening of the Psalm, the gifted King of Israel exhorts all his pious people to celebrate the praises of God, on the ground that a joyous expression of their gratitude is the most becoming homage that can be offered by the just and faithful servants of the Lord. And thence he gives as the reasons of this exhortation the acknowledged excellencies of the divine character—the faithfulness, the justice, and the bounty of God, as manifested chiefly in his dealings with his chosen people; yet, as the Psalmist confesses, not exclusively but universally; for that the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

Ver. 6—9. Here we are led to the contemplation of the power of the Deity, by whose creative Word the heavens were made, with all their shining train of living lights—each the centre of its own glory, but every single star differing from another star in glory. The hosts of heaven's immortal inhabitants are also of his creation—by the breath of his mouth they were awakened to an existence of blissful dignity, which shall

* Amyraldus.

know no bounds, while they fulfil the purposes of their destined being. In ascribing the creation to the Word of the Lord, it seems not improbable, that even in the time of David some imperfect light had been vouchsafed, on the mysterious doctrine of the Trinity; and that he who enjoyed so largely of the gifts of inspiration, here spoke of Him whom St. John introduces as the Word from the beginning, who was with God, and was God. And this suggestion is strengthened by the opinion, that David's enlightened son Solomon had also a vision of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, and spoke of Him under the appropriate figure of Wisdom in these beautiful sentences:—When He prepared the heavens I was there; when He set a compass upon the face of the depth: when He established the clouds above, when He strengthened the fountains of the deep: when He gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment; when He appointed the foundations of the earth: then was I by Him, as one brought up with Him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men. (*Prov.* viii.) It is not therefore in reverential love only, that the Psalmist calls upon us to praise his Name, but also in fear and awe of the incomprehensible Majesty of Him, who when He willed the creation of all things, spake only, and it was done; who commanded, and it stood fast.

Ver. 10—14. After his celebration of the omnipotence of God in the creation of the natural world, the Psalmist turns to the contemplation of the divine attributes, as displayed in his moral government: thus vindicating the Apostle's argument in his Epistle to the Romans, (i, 20.) "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." For whereas the counsels of ungodly rulers and their people appear to be free and above controul, by reason of their unity of purpose and combined strength; yet, if they be

adverse to the irresistible decrees of God's settled Providence, He bringeth them to nought by the unseen operations of his will; so that neither people nor princes can say, lo, we have prevailed! For it is the counsel of the Lord only that shall endure for ever, and his thoughts (or intentions) from one generation to another. And while he looketh down from heaven, beholding all the children of men, considering them with parental affection, He yet distinguishes between the evil and the good, understanding all their works, and imparting to each such a measure of his grace as seemeth good in his sight; thus fashioning all the hearts of them to his own will. Blessed therefore are the people whom He hath chosen to be his inheritance, and whose God is the Lord Jehovah.

Ver. 15—18. David here reverts to his own experience of the insufficiency of human force alone, when opposed by Him who giveth victory in the day of battle. It is not the multitude of an armed host that can save even their king from servitude or slaughter. The warrior on his fiery steed may not be delivered by strength or swiftness, if he be engaged in an unhallowed cause, or trusting in his own valour. But upon such as fear the Lord, such as fight the good fight of faith in the defence or maintenance of truth and righteousness, behold, the eye of the Lord is attent to deliver their soul from death; and upon such as trust in his mercy, to preserve them in all the casualties of warfare, and even in the time of famine to feed them with the bread of plenteousness.

Ver. 19—22. These verses have a reference to the (then present) flourishing state of Israel, in comparison of her past conflicts with the surrounding heathen nations; during which times of dread and uncertainty, it is not improbable that the personal influence of David inspired his people with faith and patience—faith in the covenanted promises of God in favour of his chosen heritage; patience under the checks and delays always incident to a state of warfare; whereby the hearts of

men frequently become dispirited and doubtful of the final issue. But now could the king of Israel say, in the name of himself and his people, our soul hath patiently tarried for the Lord; for He is our help and our shield: we *have* hoped in his Holy Name, and now *shall* our heart rejoice in Him. And he concludes this hymn of praise with an act of prayer for the Lord's continued merciful kindness upon himself and people, in terms which indicate a modest confidence in their continued faithfulness; for he asks that that kindness may be proportioned only to their deserving—Let it be upon us, like as we do put our trust in Thee.

PSALM 34.

The original title attached to this Psalm leaves no doubt of the occasion upon which it was written; though there is not the slightest allusion to that in the Psalm itself. The occasion was one of those wonderful deliverances from personal peril of which David experienced so many. The narrative is given in 1 *Sam.* xxi, wherein it is stated that the immediate means of his escaping a great danger were the suggestions of his wit or ingenuity; for that he feigned himself mad, and was in consequence allowed to escape from the hands of those who were plotting to deliver him up to Saul's revengeful malice. However indefensible such a deception might seem, it was favoured with success under Divine Providence. And as David nowhere in this Psalm refers to his escape, we may infer that he would not willingly give encouragement by his example to the repetition of an acted fraud. The love of life, however, predominates in our nature; and it is related of Solon, one of the seven Sages of Greece, that for its preservation he also once dissembled madness. But we turn to the consideration of the Psalm.

Ver. 1—7. It is seldom that we see David avowing his own determination to offer unto his God the sacrifice of prayer or of praise, but he calls upon all within the influence of his example to unite with him in the sacred duty. Here is one of the many instances of what we may call his community of feeling with all men on the subject of practical piety; his liberal anxiety that all shall be partakers of his own joyful sincerity; for that all have reasons for great thankfulness, though they stand in perpetual need of being reminded of the pleasing duty; and here

he offers them the encouragement of his own experience, and of his own knowledge of the experience of others:—I sought the Lord, and He heard me; yea, He delivered me out of all my trouble. He heareth the poor when they cry unto Him, and when they lift their eyes unto Him from their dark estate of sorrow and necessity, His eye enlighteneth them, spreading the beams of joy and peace upon their woe-stricken faces; so that they are no longer ashamed of their lowly condition, since they also share the loving-kindness of the Lord, equally with their more prosperous brethren: for His watchful guardianship extends alike to all that fear Him; His angel tarrieth round about them, and delivereth them from every spiritual danger and from every passing trouble that may threaten or assault their peace.

Ver. 8—10. The Psalmist as he proceeds becomes more earnest and animated in his exhortation; and his language is not that of fine-spun argument, but homely and forcible, terse and simple, yet trenchant as the polished sword in the hands of the warrior. Who can mistake the invitation and the promise—O taste and see how gracious the Lord is: blessed is the man that trusteth in him? Who can be doubtful of the truth of the assurance, without having first perverted the terms of the caution—O fear the Lord, ye that are his saints: for they that fear Him lack nothing? For though the lions in their far-spreading forests are swift in the pursuit of their prey, and fearless in attacking, and strong in grasping it, yet they do lack and suffer hunger; while the weak child of humanity, the weaker for his poverty and predestinated labour, (*Gen.* iii, 19,) shall want no manner of thing that is good, if he faithfully, and earnestly, and prayerfully seek it at the Fountain of all good. The beauty of the comparison and the force of the inference must be obvious to every attentive reader.

Ver. 11—16. Here, as if addressing the younger members of his family of subjects, the paternal monarch of Israel adopts the language of gentle persuasion, set off by the most attractive

motives to virtue—its rich temporal rewards. To the young, the thought of death is always repugnant in the season of health and enjoyment, and the desire of life far stronger than with the wiser among the aged, when the silver cord that once bound them to the world's illusions is loosed; and the golden bowl, from which they had quaffed off its pleasures, about to be broken. (*Eccles. xii.*) And this is a merciful dispensation, to which-ever side we look. The love of life in the young heart may, under proper instruction, prompt it to the love of virtue; and that virtue is imperfect which has not piety for its foundation. At this point the Psalmist commences his lessons of love:—Come ye children, and hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord. If ye desire length of life and peaceful days, keep your tongue from evil, and your lips that they speak no guile: eschew evil, and do good: seek peace, and ensue it. These maxims need no comment: they are the foundation upon which, in early life, may be built the superstructure of a virtuous character, equally firm and zealous to walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameless. Over all such the eyes of the Lord are ever open; to their prayers his ears are ever intent.

Ver. 16—22. This concluding portion of the Psalm sets forth in alternate passages a continuous contrast between the fate and experience of the righteous and the ungodly. But there are two verses which seem particularly to point to the final destiny, the never-ending state, of each of these distinct and opposite classes:—The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart, and will *save* such as be of an humble spirit. The hope of all believers is the soul's salvation. It may be, as the Psalmist affirms, that in their pilgrimage here great are the troubles of the righteous; for it is a part of the economy of the divine government, that whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth. This experience however, is to the faithful a confirmation of their faith, the means of animating and strengthening their hope of final glory. On the other hand the Psalmist's predic-

tion is, that misfortune shall *slay* the ungodly: the trials they must sustain in this life, which are generally the fruits of their own misdeeds, shall harden them in impenitence and unbelief, until they are overwhelmed in habitual ungodliness, and past the reach and remedy of divine grace; for though the Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, yet doth He not restrain his anger for ever. But, brethren, the consummation of the Christian's hope is that covenant of grace, whereby the Lord hath delivered the souls of his servants, and hath given the assurance that all they that put their trust in Him shall not be destitute.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XIII.

PSALM 35.

In this Psalm David is supposed by some Commentators to personate the Messiah in his sufferings and humiliation; but I see in it no intrinsic reason for straining its literal meaning beyond the expression of his faithful prayer by the king of Israel, for the interposition of the divine arm in his behalf, at some period of danger or suffering. For we do not find any passage quoted from it in the New Testament, and therein applied to our Saviour's earthly experience, either by Himself or the Evangelists: we take it therefore as an outpouring of the Psalmist's own feelings under his own experience; and in that view of it, we shall see exemplary lessons of pious confidence, deserving our admiration and imitation.

Ver. 1—3. David calls upon his God and Saviour in these verses, first, to become his advocate with his foes, that if possible they may be restrained in their hostile purposes against him, and thus avert the necessity for those sanguinary extremities, into which he feared that he and his people might be forced, by a duty of self-defence. For it were well, if upon all occasions of animosity between men, the least guilty could engage the preventing influences of the Spirit of peace to dissuade their adversaries from violating the bond of peace, which had heretofore kept them at unity with their brethren. If, however, in our appeals to Heaven, we fail of obtaining this answer to our desires, we may, like the Psalmist, call upon the God of Hosts to take our part in the fearful conflict, to fight on our side, and in the glorious apparel of his power to strike dismay into our enemies; whether they be of the earth earthy, and like ourselves the children of corruption; or spiritual foes, against whom the arm of flesh is too weak to combat, if the spirit be unwilling or indifferent. And under this latter alternative, the pious David instructs us for what kind of help to pray in our extremity—namely, for grace to help in our time of

need—and for faith which can look onward and upward to that spiritual aid which alone can impart confidence in the hour of trial. He implores that communication from above, which like the audible voice of the Saviour quelling the raging of the sea, should at once silence his overwhelming fears—say unto my *soul*, I am *thy* salvation!

Ver. 4—6. If, my brethren, we were more accustomed to repose our confidence in the care and protection of the Almighty, than in our own wisdom, or cunning, or strength, when we are suffering under the enmity of those who imagine mischief against us; our assurance of safety would be far stronger, our certainty of deliverance much better founded, our peace more undisturbed, than while we are devising how we may render evil for evil: thus perhaps in the end incurring a greater degree of guilt than even they who are our enemies. It is lawful to look up to the God of Heaven for retributive justice upon such as deal treacherously with us; for He hath declared, vengeance is mine: I will repay it. But it is not lawful, even in the ministration of this world's justice, for the sufferer to judge the offender, and to dictate the amount of his punishment. Much less may we take upon ourselves to avenge those secret acts of enmity, which, how deeply soever we may suffer from them, are known in the extent of their sinfulness only to Him, unto whom all hearts be open, and from whom no secrets can be hidden. The world's peace and the peace of the individual are much broken up by the thirst for revenge. But our best temporal security against the devices of the evil-disposed, is obedience to the precept, Come out from among them, and be separate; while we may trust, in the spirit of the Psalmist's prayer, that the Angel of the Lord, that is the minister of his justice, in whatever form he may act, will scatter them, and bring them to nought.

Ver. 7, 8. Here the Psalmist complains of the nature and quality of that enmity, for the punishment of which he impre-

cates the divine justice upon the offenders against his peace. They were secret enemies; they were plotters of mischief in scenes far away from his presence or his knowledge; back-biters, slanderers, evil-speakers, and evil-doers, where he had not the means of self-defence or of vindicating his own integrity. Against such there is no human law of sufficient force to detect their guilt, or to punish them according to their deservings. David therefore gives utterance to the judicious and reasonable prayer of his heart, that as they have privily laid their net to destroy him without a cause; so they may themselves fall into the mischief of their own devising, and be taken unawares in that sudden destruction, which in the darkness of their souls' designs they had plotted for him.

Ver. 9, 10. In the anticipation that his prayer will be answered, and himself delivered from the machinations of his secret enemies, the Psalmist breaks forth in that spirit of thankfulness to the God of his salvation, which is the prevailing characteristic throughout the entire volume of these sacred aspirations. He bids his soul rejoice, yea, and pledges his word that it shall rejoice continually. The very members of his body shall bear witness to the loving-kindness of his Creator, and manifest their rejoicing with his spirit. Yet, with all the humility that becomes the man in communion with his God, he speaks of himself as poor and in misery, as weaker than his foes, and as owing entirely to the Lord's hand his deliverance from those that were in their subtlety too strong for him, and would have spoiled him, but for the interposition of the arm of Almighty Power uplifted in his behalf.

Ver. 11—16. Here, like holy Job, he prayed that he might be weighed in an even balance, that God might know his integrity, and falls into a repetition of his complaint against his dishonest adversaries, setting forth a comparative view of their false dealings towards him; while he shews that in the spirit of an Israelite indeed he had conducted himself to-

wards them with the fidelity of a friend and brother; and even with the affection of a son that mourneth for a lost mother. This is a rare instance of rendering good for evil: but we cannot doubt the sincerity of David, when we reflect that he is making his appeal to an Omniscient God. This is an example of the charity that "suffereth long, and is kind," and which has never been surpassed by any but the dying Saviour Himself, who, in his last extremity upon the painful cross, prayed thus for his murderers—Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And the Psalmist's recorded experience resembles that of our blessed Lord; for he complains that in his adversity his enemies rejoiced, and magnified their spiteful triumph by gathering themselves together against him; and, as it happens in all cases of unjust persecution, swelling their train with the very abjects, the willing slaves of the tyrant and the slanderer, ever ready to sneer, and mock, and gnash with their teeth, when a virtuous victim is offered to their malice.

Ver. 17—22. How natural is this transition of the pious mind from the contemplation of its sufferings to the relief which is to be derived only from the prayer of faith! Such is the course pursued by the Psalmist in these verses; though the injustice done to him presses so heavily on his thoughts, that in the weakness of our common nature he cannot help mingling some complaint with his prayer. But the great object of his prayer is that *his soul* may be delivered from the calamities brought upon him; that they may not tempt or betray him into an unholy despondency, or faithlessness, or forgetfulness of his entire dependence on the God of his salvation—O deliver my soul, and my darling from the lions. This last term occurs also in the 22nd Psalm, and is there as here coupled with the word *soul*, both words having equal force; for in the Hebrew the word translated *darling* means my chief treasure, or my only one. And truly, my brethren, in all the trials or conflicts which it may be our lot to experience during our brief period of existence here; whether they be the immediate dispensation of

God's own Providence, or the work of man's enmity; our chief care should be the preservation of the soul in peace; that no murmurings should darken its contemplation of the final deliverance; that the consciousness of its integrity, whether in action or design, should prove its support under every trial; that no revengeful thoughts should sully the purity of God's Image impressed thereupon at the creation; that it is not in the conflicts of man with man that the righteous will look to his own sword for deliverance, or that it is his own arm which can help him; but that in all his experience it is the Christian's paramount duty to commit his way unto the Lord, and to trust in Him; in the sure and certain hope, that in all things which are truly desirable, the Lord will bring it to pass, will give him his heart's desire, will make his righteousness as clear as the light, and his just dealing as the noon-day.

Ver. 23—28. Here the pious king and priest of Israel becomes emboldened by his visions of faith in God's espousal of his just cause. He casts himself upon the impartial judgment of God, not as between man and man, for a verdict on comparative merits. He calls upon the Ruler of the whole earth, his God and his Lord, to judge *his* quarrel, to avenge *his* cause, according to the perfect righteousness that ruleth alone in the Heaven of heavens. He prays fervently that his foes may not be permitted, even for a season, to enjoy a malignant triumph over him, and to say in their hearts—There, there! so would we have it: we have devoured him! At the same time he forgets not the friends who have been faithful to him through evil report and good report; who in defiance of the slanders and the malice of others, have favoured his righteous dealings, and proved his integrity. He prays that they may be glad and rejoice in the stedfastness of their own friendship towards him, and that they may acknowledge his deliverance to have been wrought by the Lord, who hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant. For himself he engages that his tongue shall proclaim the righteousness and praise of his God all the day long.

PSALM 36.

This meditation of the inspired writer consists of only two distinct portions: the first descriptive of the distinguishing marks in the character of his enemies: the second an expression of his own confidence that he is himself an object of the continued loving-kindness of his God, and that the Church at large shall still rest in safety under the shadow of his wing.

Ver. 1—4. David here declareth in a few words, that the deep conviction of his own heart is, that all wickedness proceeds from unbelief; that in the absence of the fear of God the heart of man is hardened against every other fear; encouraging pride, and self-deceit, and self-sufficiency, and self-flattery; all of which are cherished under a prevailing blindness to the most obvious truth that presents itself to the reason and understanding of man; namely, that there is a God to whom we are accountable for all our thoughts, words, and actions. This is so plain a truth, that as the Psalmist affirms in another place, it is the fool only who dares to think, even in his own heart, that there is no God; though at the same time he has not the courage to provoke the reproaches of his fellow-man by avowing his unbelief. Yet he can flatter himself in his own sight, as superior in discernment and understanding to his more humble brethren; and in this imagined superiority, can indulge his natural evil propensities to deceit and unrighteousness, caring neither to seem good nor to do good, delighting in mischief, spurning every good thought, and indifferent to whatever is evil. There are strong evidences, my brethren, scattered throughout the Scriptures, that such is the general character of our nature; until it is awakened to a sense of the existence of a God, who, if we propitiate not his grace and favour, will finally make Himself known as a God of vengeance; and in the administration of his justice, a consuming fire. The pride of our nature indulged for a few short years, though it may tempt us to flatter ourselves in our own sight, will be proved to

have been a hollow deception, in the great day of account, when the secrets of every heart shall be laid open, and in the sight of men and angels the divine justice made manifest in the condemnation of unbelief and of all unrighteousness. Therefore let him who in the pride of an unregenerate heart thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he finally and everlastingly fall: for it is an unalterable command to every living soul, that by faith and deeds of righteousness we labour to glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are God's.

Ver. 5—10. These verses present a striking contrast between the temporal condition of the ungodly and the righteous; for as happiness is the acknowledged end and aim of our being, it is impossible that any degree of it shall be attained in this life, unless its foundation be laid in the sure and certain hope inspired by the written Word of God; for though the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work; yet it is only from His own revelation of Himself, that his creature man can acquire a knowledge of the Divine Character and Attributes; of his own relation to his Creator; and of his own duties, as dependent upon God for all the blessings of time and of eternity. If, however, he will cherish an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the Living God, he must ever remain a stranger to those consolations which are the fruits of a true and lively faith. These fruits are seen in the language of the Psalmist, as often as his reflections lead him to proclaim his own convictions, that he derives his happy confidence from his intimate knowledge of the Divine Character; and from his entire dependence upon that great and good Being, whose mercy reacheth unto the heavens, and his faithfulness unto the clouds; whose righteousness standeth like the strong mountains; and whose judgments are unfathomable as the great deep. For herein does the wise son of Jesse discover the excellency, that is, the perfection of the Divine Mercy, and the happiness to be derived from cherishing an habitual confidence in it. The

lowest beings in the scale of creation owe their safety, equally with ourselves, to the protection vouchsafed to them under the shadow of the almighty wing. Thou, Lord, shalt save both man and beast. They shall be satisfied with the plenteousness of thy house, and Thou shalt give them drink of thy pleasures as from an inexhaustible river: for in Thee is the well of life, and in thy light shall we see light. This is the Psalmist's confidence, and in his exemplary faith we have a lesson of boundless value. But though thus strong in the expression of his confidence, he neglects not the duty of persevering in prayer, that the Divine Mercy may be continued towards them who know and serve the Lord; and by serving Him, afford the best evidence that they are faithful and true of heart.

Ver. 11, 12. Here too it may be seen, that the Psalmist does not think it enough to have prayed for the continuance of those substantial blessings which we derive immediately from the bounty of heaven, and by which as the appointed means, we live, and move, and have our being sustained and prolonged upon the earth: but regarding the power of the ungodly by whom he is surrounded, as too mighty for his own safety, if he were left to his own strength, he prays also for the protection of the divine arm, that he may not be cast down by them: and as though in a vision he saw his prayer answered, he exults in the anticipated overthrow of his enemies—There are they, fallen: they *are* cast down, and shall not be able to stand! The conclusion to be drawn from the whole of this Psalm, viewed in its two distinct parts, is that the wickedness which proceeds from an evil heart of unbelief is as liable to the wrath of God in this life as hereafter; while we are assured that the work of righteousness shall be peace here, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XIV.

PSALM 37.

The argument or subject of this Psalm throughout, consists of advice and consolation to the Church and People of God, oppressed and afflicted as they were by prosperous and triumphant wickedness. And the whole is given by the Psalmist, as dictated to him by the Holy Spirit. Faith and patience are herein recommended to all Christians, upon the double consideration of that sure reward which awaits the righteous, and that punishment which shall certainly be the lot of the wicked. This Psalm is rather a collection of divine precepts on these subjects, than a continued and connected discourse:—commencing in a style of familiar reproof, softened down as it were throughout, by the most reasonable arguments for the exercise of our faith and patience.

Ver. 1, 2. I verily believe, my brethren, there is no sin so universally prevalent among those who profess and call themselves Christians, as the sin of murmuring and complaining, and distrusting of God's Providence. And men are the more apt to indulge this unholy feeling, when comparing their own lot with that of some others who are unquestionably more wicked, and yet more prosperous than themselves. But this foolish envy is the fruit of an unbelieving heart. Yet one would think, there should need no stronger argument against the indulgence of this feeling, than the frequent examples presented to every generation of man, of the vanity and vexation of all worldly greatness, when they see the pride, pomp, and circumstance of the wicked extinguished in a moment, and for ever; and the vain actors themselves cut down like grass, and withered even as the green herb.

Ver. 3, 4. And the proper view and reflections upon the always certain, and often speedy and tragical end of sinners, however exalted above their fellow men in this life—and the more exalted, the more impressive is their downfall—the reflections on these spectacles afford a strong lesson to us, to proceed in the humble path of truth and holiness; to keep the unity

of the faith of Christ's Holy Catholic Church upon earth; until our faith and works shall have brought us through our journey to the heavenly land of promise, to dwell therein for ever. For he who delighteth only in the perishable enjoyments of this life, has not, nor is it fit he always should have them within his reach. But they who delight in spiritual good will desire that which they delight in, and obtain their desire. This is the promise of God's Holy Spirit.

Ver. 5—7. It falls more or less within the experience of us all, that our name and our life are cast into unmerited shade for a season, by the malice and calumny of others: but these clouds will vanish, and truth will shine forth with the greater splendour. That which will be verified in his redeemed at the last day, has been already shewn in the character of the once persecuted and murdered Saviour at his resurrection. And if the spotless Lamb of God was dumb in the presence, and under the malice of those who were calumniating his character, and robbing him of his life; silent resignation best becomes us who suffer for our sins, even when unjustly slandered by our proud and envious neighbours. But we must learn to look from within ourselves towards God, and not to think too much of the value of the world's applause or censure: for whoever he be that worketh ill to his neighbour, after the evil counsels of his own heart, shall not escape the final recompense of his wickedness.

Ver. 8, 9. As there will be no motives for anger or displeasure against the evil doers when they are suffering the penalties of their transgressions under the flaming sword of the divine vengeance; so now the followers of the Lamb will resist any emotions of anger against them. It is difficult, we admit, to suppress these feelings; but they are carnal, and must be subdued, even for our own present peace; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. We know that the wicked doers *shall* be rooted out; and the evidence of our faith is, that we patiently abide the Lord's will, in confidence that we shall finally inherit the promised land.

Ver. 10, 11. The whole duration of the world itself is but a little while in the sight of them whose hope is full of immortality. These are the meek-spirited—they who bear their own adversities and the prosperity of their enemies, without complaining, without envy or anger. For them there is a place prepared, a possession in the kingdom and city of the Prince of Peace, which the Lord the Righteous Judge shall give them at the last day. And that Lord Himself hath assured them of the beatitude which is their portion in this life also—Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.

Ver. 12, 13. The original enmity of the rebellious angel, Satan, towards the Holy One and the Just, is perpetuated in the children of darkness. The wicked will ever sustain their enmity towards their virtuous and religious brethren. The rage of the former against the latter is compared to that of wild beasts; but a day is coming when their rage will be vented upon themselves in the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched. God, who knoweth this, hath left them to their reward; and Christians who know it, may well abide patiently in the Lord.

Ver. 14, 15. The tongue of the wicked is a sword or a bow which shooteth its arrows, even bitter words, alike against the meek Redeemer and his faithful disciples. The malice of the Jews extended equally and continually to the Master and his servants. Though we all know and remember this, few lay it to heart, and consider them as set forth for an example; and their history as written for our learning.

Ver. 16, 17. A little, with the blessing of God upon it, is better than much encumbered by his curse. His blessing can enlarge a mite into a talent; but from the want of it, a talent may shrink to a mite. The great question is, whether He be with us, or against us? but through our forgetfulness, or indifference, or faithlessness, this question is too seldom asked. For it is by Him alone that the arms of the wicked are broken; by Him alone are the righteous upholden.

Ver. 18, 19. The history of the widow's barrel of meal and cruse of oil, which wasted not in the time of famine, as given in the fourth chapter of II Kings, is emblematic of that universal care which the Almighty extends over those who put their trust in Him. For the favour of God is, to them who obtain it, an enduring inheritance; for as it is herein promised by the Holy Spirit, they shall be safe even in times of common peril, and in the days of general scarcity they shall have enough for all their necessities. But these verses bear a higher application to the condition of the righteous; for it is said that their inheritance shall endure for ever! Herein then is our chief hope—the night of our earthly pilgrimage may be dark and tempestuous, but joy cometh in the morning of resurrection.

Ver. 20. Here again, but under another similitude, the destruction of the wicked is foretold. Here they are spoken of as being senseless as the beasts that were fattened for slaughter and for sacrifice: wantoning like them in their abundance, and ignorant and careless of the day of their doom. In the mean time the Almighty is whetting that sword which nothing can withstand; and those fires are kindling for the sacrifice of the great day, which shall never be extinguished—as the prophet Isaiah expresses himself, the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompense, when the streams of that fire shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone.

Ver. 21, 22. The word "borroweth" must not here be confined to its literal sense, or its common interpretation. The wealth of some is increased, and in some cases created, by the labour of others. The rich ungodly man borrows his poorer neighbour's strength, and time, and labour; but he pays him not again in the proportion which he himself derives from that labour. While the true Christian employer, will like *his* Divine Master, not only scrupulously observe the rules of justice, and equity, and generosity; but will ever keep in mind that it is more blessed to give than to receive. The hard master will for-

get that he receives all his wealth from God by the instrumentality of his labouring servants: the Christian, while in all things he acknowledges the bounty of God, will not withhold that which should requite the toil, and insure the comfort of his humbler fellow-man. And in the following verse the consequences to these opposite characters are plainly described. [Read ver. 22.] And St. James has forcibly denounced the offenders in this point:—Behold, the hire of your labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

Ver. 23, 24. When the angels came and ministered unto Christ in his great temptation by Satan, there was evidence enough afforded of the Almighty interposition in behalf of all who trust in his providential care, to inspire us with faith and hope. For, as it is promised in the 91st Psalm, He shall defend thee under his wings, and thou shalt be safe under his feathers: his faithfulness and truth shall be thy shield and buckler. And this promise holds good to every generation, and to every individual Christian.

Ver. 25, 26. It is one of the best among Solomon's proverbial precepts, that the liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered again. For it is an anticipation of the Christian rule of charity, which was enforced by the Saviour's authority many ages after—Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, shall men give into your bosom. Yet is our highest reward promised of God: for to the just and charitable is reserved not only the bread that perisheth, but that which endureth for ever: the blessings of time being crowned with those of eternity.

Ver. 27—30. There is scarcely to be found a book richer in moral wisdom, than the Book of Ecclesiasticus, said to be written by one Jesus the son of Sirach. Its precepts are in perfect accordance with those of the Gospel of our Lord and

Saviour Jesus Christ; though it is not admitted into our canonical Bible, as wanting proof of its dictation by the Holy Spirit. One of its numerous precepts is perfectly applicable to this portion of the Psalm under our consideration. Whatsoever thou takest in hand, saith the wise Instructor, remember *the end*, and thou shalt never do amiss. This contains the whole spirit of the Psalmist's injunction—Flee from evil, and do the thing that is good. In these verses, however, we are reminded of the certain consequences that will follow upon our choice. The faithful are preserved for ever: but even the seed of the ungodly shall be rooted out.

Ver. 31, 32. The original word, which is here adapted to the plural number, that is, to *all* the righteous, is more properly expressive of the RIGHTEOUS ONE, who in all points was like unto his brethren, though free from sin. But He is our example, that we should follow his steps. We are commanded to be pure, even as He is pure. May the Lord put his laws into our hearts, that out of the abundance of the heart our mouth may speak; that as the mouth speaketh, the hands may act, and our goings be directed in the way of life.

Ver. 33, 34. As the Lord Jehovah left not his JUST ONE in the hands of his persecuting and murderous enemies the Jews; but raised Him again from the dead; so will the day come when the poor righteous man shall be delivered from the hand of the spoiler and the oppressor; when he shall witness *their* sentence to everlasting shame and confusion of face, among the spirits of the just made perfect; when those "groaning for anguish of spirit shall say within themselves, this is he whom we had some time in derision, and a proverb of reproach. We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour! How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints!" (*Wisdom* v, 3—5.)

Ver. 35. St. Paul gives the same lesson to his Hebrew converts, in these words—Cast not away your confidence, which

hath great recompense of reward. We all know, my brethren, how irksome is the work of patience under the trials of life, and the wrongs we suffer from others: but the believing heart will persevere, knowing that we have a just Judge in heaven; for yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

Ver. 36, 37. Perhaps such another instance does not occur throughout all history, of the complete downfall of impious greatness, as that of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; but even he, though entirely estranged from God, was favoured with a previous warning of his downfall, as related in the fourth chapter of the prophet Daniel—"I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and behold a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven. He cried aloud, and said thus:—Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches: shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches." We must not regard this as the exclusive fate of the wicked great. Every man has his duties and his responsibilities. All are trees in the vineyard of God, and every one that beareth not good fruit is already condemned to be hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Ver. 38—41. Having taken the view to which the Psalmist leads us, of the utter vanity of human pride, of ambition, and of general ungodliness, let us turn our thoughts to the advantages of a life of righteousness: for that shall bring a man peace at the last.

"Of Thee, O Lord Jesu, is our salvation: be Thou our strength in this mortal life, which is a time of trouble: help us against our spiritual enemies, and deliver us from them: deliver us from the power of Satan, and from all evil: and save us from the guilt and punishment of sin: because our strength is in Thee, and in Thee alone." *Bp. Horne.*

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XV.

PSALM 38.

This is the third of seven out of the whole Book of Psalms that are styled Penitential. It is a prayer for the moderation of God's anger, under the pressure of an unquiet conscience; that wholesome condition of frail mortality, which is seldom scen or felt, but under some manifest infliction of divine anger, which arouses the sinner to the duty of self-examination and of consequent penitence. The perusal of this Psalm, as an exercise of devout humiliation, can never prove unseasonable in the hour of serious reflection upon the weakness of our common nature, and its proneness, not only to violate, but to resist the divine laws.

Ver. 1. We all have reason enough, my brethren, to deprecate the heavy displeasure of the Almighty Judge of our actions; for if He should be extreme to mark what is done amiss by us, and to punish us according to our deservings, we must feel, like the guilty Cain, that our punishment would be unbearable. But timely prayer, if offered by the contrite heart, is the sure refuge against this extremity: for, that Mercy is the prevailing attribute of the Divine character is proved, to the utter exclusion of despair, in the rich provision which God has made from all eternity for the pardon of all our sins. Be it then our constant prayer that He rebuke us not in his anger, neither chasten us in his heavy displeasure. For if the wrath of God abide on us until we can provoke Him no longer, neither propitiate his mercy, our lot is endless despair.

Ver. 2—8. Here is a catalogue of sufferings, described under images of bodily diseases, which we must not understand literally. The tortures of the spirit are nevertheless far more horrible than any we can suffer in the flesh; though it must needs be that sometimes they are united in the person of the dying sinner, when he feels that the hour of grace has passed away from him for ever: and that nothing remains but the fearful looking for of approaching judgment and self-con-

demnation—I say, self-condemnation—for we are reminded, that in that day every mouth shall be stopped, and every tongue confess itself guilty before God. All quibbling, and subterfuge, and self-justification, will then be put to silence by the retributive thunders of conscience; whose still small voice—the representative of the Divinity that stirs within our bosoms here—had been so long, so contemptuously disregarded. Oh, if in the comparatively peaceful seasons of our earthly pilgrimage we could learn to estimate the worth to our souls of this sacred monitor, how many perils might we avoid here—how many pangs escape here and hereafter for ever! But how often does man, like the deaf adder, turn away his ear, and refuse to listen to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely!

Ver. 9, 10. Upon this passage it is well remarked by one of our old divines, that “in bodily sickness there are three symptoms of approaching dissolution; and the *soul* is in great extremity when the three corresponding symptoms appear upon *her*; namely, when she hath neither resolution to will, nor power to perform, nor knowledge to discern the things that belong unto her health and peace.”* For then is there only left the feeble hope, if it exist, that the merciful ear of our Creator and Redeemer is not shut to the expression of nature’s extremest sufferings; the hope, feeble as it must be, yet so faithfully portrayed in the prayer of the Psalmist—Lord, Thou knowest all my desire: and my groaning is not hid from Thee.

Ver. 11, 12. What a true picture is this of the world’s friendship towards one who has fallen into disrepute, whether deservedly or not! The strong ties of affection itself are relaxed; and even the former lover is chilled into suspensive doubt or cold indifference; the once professing neighbour stands looking on in silent listlessness of sympathy; and the very claims of affinity are disregarded by the self-divorced

*Bishop Horne.

kinsman: meanwhile the persecuted sufferer is surrounded by the hidden snares of his enemies, who are watching for opportunities of inflicting evil upon him, and devising wickedness and deceitful charges against him. But wisdom is justified of all her children, and there is within *them* that which passeth show.

Ver. 13—20. The soul that can retreat within itself, and hold communion with its God by the prayer of faith, needs no other defence against the assaults of earthly or spiritual foes. It may be burthened with a sense of its own wickedness in the sight of Him who knoweth the secrets of the heart; but of this the sinner's fellow mortals are but the instrumental avengers, and that only for a season: for He, by whose permission they inflict tortures upon better men than themselves, hath set bounds to their agency, saying, Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther: and at the appointed time, upon *their* heads shall the day of retribution arise. Such was David's confidence in the midst of his afflictions—In Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust: Thou shalt answer for me, O Lord, my God! And to insure the blessing of protection and deliverance by the divine arm, he thus renews his supplication:—[Read *v.* 21, 22.]

PSALM 39.

This is one of the Psalms appropriately introduced in the Burial Service of our Church, and is generally read at the funerals of younger persons, the other being better adapted to those of the aged.* Viewed as the composition of an individual, we cannot be too thankful for the preservation of so sublime and truthful a meditation upon the transitoriness of that state through which we are all passing, with, whatever be our respective ages, an equal uncertainty as to the distance of its termination; for, as in all other events of time, none can tell what a day may bring forth.

Ver. 1—4. The opening of this Psalm bears a resemblance to the language of the 13th and 14th verses of the last; con-

* This is my own practice, though I may not be strictly correct in speaking of it as the general one.—E.

firming the resolution to maintain that silence in the presence of the ungodly, which is often the surest safeguard against their wicked devices, as well as against evil words; so easily provoked, when we yield to the weakness of our nature, by giving railing for railing; whereby we incur the danger of falling into an equal degree of guilt with our enemy: for even good words, as the Psalmist hints, have a dangerous tendency to increase the rage and the guilt of such as set at nought all counsel in the indulgence of their violent passions. Nevertheless, he confesses that this exercise of his spirit was pain and grief to him, till his very heart within him groaned in the smothered flame of his righteous indignation; and even until its natural fires kindled at last, and compelled him to give utterance to its long suppressed feelings. But he does not so in imprecating vengeance upon his enemies, nor in deprecating the further chastisement of the Almighty upon his own head. He seeks relief only in one long and deeply meditative prayer, such as manifests a correct view of his own frailty, and of the folly of giving too great an importance to the transient sufferings of this life, whether they be of God's appointment or of man's infliction: a prayer which could have found no utterance from lips which had not been touched with a live coal from off the altar of divine grace, whereby iniquity is taken away, and sin is purged.

Ver. 5—12. The Bible translation of the 5th verse is preferable to this, as being more explicit and definite—Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am! For at its greatest stretch it is but as a span long:—whatever therefore be its allotted experience of trouble or of joy, the one is too light and insignificant to justify a spirit of murmuring against thy decrees and dispensations; the other too worthless, as compared with that which shall be revealed in thy presence hereafter, to deserve the smallest share of human affection or solicitude: since the extremest length of man's pilgrimage on the earth is nothing in

comparison of the eternity of blessedness prepared for the spirits of the just, when they shall have been made perfect through suffering: for verily our present state is altogether made up of vanity: man walketh as in a dream, and as from a dream he shall awake to the verities of an endless existence: but in this dream he is disquieted by the vain desire of grasping shadows which are for ever eluding his pursuit: he beguiles himself by heaping up imaginary treasures, in perfect ignorance of their utter worthlessness; while wearying himself with the painful uncertainty of his own possession of them for a single day, and with the no less painful doubt of their destiny, when he may no longer call them his own. To as many of us, my brethren, as have not a great share of this world's wealth to bind our affections to it, the folly of this delusion may seem very palpable: indeed we may be tempted by self-love to magnify the folly beyond its proper comparative proportions. But let us not give too hasty a judgment on others lest in so doing we unconsciously pronounce our own condemnation. Let us remove the beam from our own eye, before we meddle with the mote in our brother's eye. This life, with all the certainty of its uncertainty constantly appealing to our reason through the medium of our senses, and by the still small voice of conscience within us, supplies those threads by which even the pigmy tyrants of the flesh can fasten down the giant mind to earth and all its passing shadows.* The *love* of life sways the tenant of the cottage equally with the lord of the palace, and prevents him from making a just estimate of its brevity, its emptiness, its nothingness. The Psalmist, however, in his meditative mood, recoils from this absurdity of trusting in vanity: he raises his thoughts to a better and enduring state of existence, though it had not been revealed in his day so clearly as it is to us: he approaches the Lord of Life and Glory, with

* The merit of originating this idea, belongs to Dean Swift: but the reader will scarcely be tempted to search for it in *Gulliver's Travels*. However—*suum cuique*.

the humble confession of his trust in the loving-kindness of his God, through the remainder of his time, and in eternity; and he implores the purifying influences of the Holy Spirit, to qualify him for a brighter inheritance—Deliver me from all mine offences; for wherein, O Lord, is my hope? Truly my hope is ever in Thee. Under the varied trials thou hast appointed to my lot, I *have* been confounded: but I opened not my mouth in complaining; for I was conscious it was thy doing, and that Thou of very faithfulness hath caused me to be troubled. Yet for a season were thy chastisements grievous unto the flesh, and to the untutored spirit: I cannot alway subdue the murmuring tongue, but must needs implore Thee of thy mercy to take thy plague, the putrifying sores of thy displeasure, away from me: for under thy rebukes, all the beauty with which Thou hast endowed our frail nature becomes unseemly as the decayed garment; the desire of the eyes, that in which the soul delighted, is become a shame and a loathing; proving to thy favoured creature that pride was not made for man; for that all his aspirations which fall short of promoting thy glory, are but vexation of spirit, and he himself but very vanity. It is not while the strong man armed keepeth his palace, and his goods are at peace—it is not in the day of health, and strength, and prosperity, and freedom from fear, when all goes merry as the marriage bell—that man can be persuaded to reflect that all these things shall be dissolved. He thoughtlessly rests upon the uncovenanted expectation, that to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant. But on the bed of suffering, in the progress of decay, in the hour of dissolution, all these thoughts perish. Then, if never before, he will be impelled to offer the prayer of humiliation, if not of faith. But, my brethren, how much wiser it were in us all to reflect betimes, and at all times, on our life's uncertainty! to recal our spirit's wanderings from the things that belong unto its peace; to take heed to our ways, that we offend not; and to discipline our thoughts to the spirit

of that prayer with which the Psalmist concludes his sublime and faithful view of the vanity of all earthly possessions and enjoyments. [Read *v.* 13—15.]

PSALM 40.

The close application of this Psalm to the character and mission of our Great High Priest, which is made by the Apostle Paul in the 10th chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, forbids us to consider it in any other light, than as an inspired description and prediction of the One Atoning Sacrifice for sin, which should abrogate for ever all the sacrifices enjoined in the Legal Dispensation; and which were permitted for an appointed season, only as having a shadow of good things to come. There is a difficulty in appropriating some of the verses of this Psalm to the character of the Messiah, as spoken in His Name; but this will vanish, if we admit them as expressions of Christ's care for his Church in its infant state, and of its weakness and suffering during that period.

Ver. 1—5. This passage is allowed by the generality of Commentators to refer to Christ's resurrection from the grave, that horrible pit of mire and clay, from which our nature shrinks with such strong aversion; as well as to the consequent deliverance of his Church by the final atonement for universal sin, which He had made by the shedding of his own precious blood; for, as the Apostle argues, Almost all things are by the Law purged with blood: and without shedding of blood there is no remission. It was therefore necessary, that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. The risen Saviour then is made to utter the language of thanksgiving to his Heavenly Father, and with great propriety; since, though He had triumphed over death, He had not yet been recalled to the glory which for our sakes He had left: his mission was not yet completed, as we read of his re-appearance to his disciples many days after his resurrection, and of his continued instructions to them. He was still the man Christ Jesus; and in this Psalm He speaks of the many that shall see

his salvation; and of the blessedness of those who had trusted in Him, and had set their hope in Him.

Ver. 6—13. Here follows the impressive portion of the Psalm, which cannot be viewed otherwise than as the prophetically personal language of Christ Himself, since it has been so applied by the great Apostle of the Gentiles. The opening of this passage presents the Incarnate Son of God, acknowledging the wondrous works of the Almighty in the creation and preservation, the redemption and sanctification of mankind, solely because of his loving-kindness for us; that is, because his thoughts are ever to us-ward. The Messiah Himself owns that they are beyond expression: for that God had rejected the temporary sacrifices offered under the Law, though these were of his own express appointment, as altogether insufficient for the atonement of universal guilt, and the satisfaction of divine justice: but that, having demanded a higher price for our redemption than the whole earth could furnish; his well-beloved Son proffered his own humiliation and penal sacrifice, for the fulfilment of those promises of a Redeemer mighty to save, which were written in the volume of the Book of Eternal Truth. And our Saviour having accomplished the sacrificial part of his beneficent undertaking, appeals to His Father in Heaven upon his own faithfulness in the discharge of the ministerial part of his voluntary mission of mercy: I have declared thy righteousness: I have not kept back thy loving-mercy and truth from the great congregation.

Ver. 14—21. These concluding verses of the Psalm can apply only to the state of the visible Church of Christ on its first establishment; when its faithful members were compassed about with dangers, plotted against them by heathen rulers and nations; when, having witnessed the crucifixion of its Lord and Master, the consciousness of its own sinfulness operated as a restraint upon its desires to look heavenward for temporal deliverance. The Saviour, therefore, in behalf of his Church,

prays for the divine protection ; that those who seek after God may be joyful and glad, rejoicing alway in their assured salvation ; and that their enemies, those who seek after their souls to destroy them, should be driven backward, and put to confusion. For, as poverty and reproach and persecution were the lot of the earlier Christians, teachers as well as disciples, they needed the manifest protection of an Almighty arm. Thou art my Helper and Redeemer : make no long tarrying, O my God !

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XVI.

PSALM 41.

It has not so been interpreted by Commentators in general, who have deemed the second portion of this Psalm, and very properly so, applicable to the treachery of Ahithophel, the former counsellor and friend of David, but now revolted to the cause of the rebellious Absalom. There can be as little doubt, however, that the opening of the Psalm is a prayerful reflection on the kindness which the persecuted David had before experienced from Jonathan, when compelled to flee and hide himself from the wrathful madness of Saul. The contrast is so natural, that it fully justifies this interpretation. The first portion is also a general incentive to the exercise of that brightest of all the Christian graces, Charity.

Ver. 1—3. We are told that the fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much. And what is more likely to prompt this prayer, than the sense, the remembrance of benefits received, from one who is now lying on the bed of sickness, or encompassed with dangers of any kind, mental or bodily? It is then that the holy feeling of gratitude, where it exists, will silently and secretly, though not the less fervently, exhale itself in the incense of intercessory prayer—an offering always acceptable at the altar of the Mercy Seat; and as the Apostle James assures us, effectual; insomuch that the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up: and, if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. It is seldom that exhortations to charity have the desired effect upon those who do not cherish the principle within themselves: and even where this principle, or more properly speaking, this grace exists, yet, such is the imperfection of our nature, that its exercise may always be traced to a selfish motive. The most pious, the most benevolent spirit feels, that every act of brotherly kindness, or of diffusive charity, is well-pleasing in the sight of God, and shall not miss its due reward. Or if he obey the im-

pulse of nature only, the recompense is equally sure: the warm glow of conscious virtue is the divinity that stirs within him, inspiring the hallowed pride of high descent—the conviction that the Image of his Creator is not all obliterated from his soul. While, as a disciple of Him whose universal love prompted Him to shed his blood for all, the Christian is encouraged to deeds of charity, in all its various requirements, by the assurances of the recompense of eternal rewards. Neither is time without its promises. The inspired Preacher, the son of David, thus exhorts us:—Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days: and the instruction of the great Apostle to the Hebrews tends to the same point on the subject of general benevolence—Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. It is no great stretch of the imagination to allow that such was the experience of the amiable Jonathan. He had entertained, and protected, and cherished in his very heart of hearts, the stripling son of Jesse, while he was yet a stranger; and had stood by him in his extremity, when David was in fact poor and needy, and in trouble from the persecutions of Jonathan's own father. And does not the fervent effectual prayer of the righteous Psalmist, remaining to this day, almost amount to a demonstration that the son of Saul had entertained an angel unawares; who should gratefully intercede for him at the throne of grace, in the most earnest strains of supplication? The Lord preserve him, and keep him alive, that he may be blessed upon earth: and deliver not Thou him into the will of his enemies!

Ver. 4—9. In turning to the contemplation of his sufferings from the treachery of false friends, the Psalmist begins his appeal to the God of Heaven with a confession of his own unworthiness, and a prayer for pardon and strength; feeling and confessing that his sufferings, as permitted by the Almighty, were not altogether undeserved. And herein is a good example

to all: for all have sinned; and how can we hope, my brethren, that God will interpose for our protection against any threatening or existing evil; unless by penitence and prayer, and confession of our unworthiness of the least of his mercies, we approach Him with clean hands and a pure heart? Thus did David—Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee: and thus was he qualified to pour forth his complaints of the treachery which embittered his soul. Ahithophel had been the counsellor of David, and was therefore the more dangerous as an enemy, being in possession of the secrets of the state. But Absalom had stolen the hearts of the men of Israel; and they formed a League against the peace of their own country; and when Ahithophel the prime minister joined himself unto them, many more peeled off the thin skin of their former professions, and became Leaguers also. And (cried David) O Lord, I pray Thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness! Who is here, that would not give a hearty Amen to this prayer, should such a minister arise in our day? * The Psalmist amply justifies his complaint by the description of the falsehood of his former friend:—If he come to see me, he speaketh vanity, and his heart conceiveth falsehood within himself; and when he cometh forth he telleth it. Even he, mine own familiar friend whom I trusted, who did also eat of my bread, hath laid great wait for me. This, my brethren, is no uncommon example of falsehood, even in humbler life than that of kings and ministers of state. But faithfulness in friendship, whatever be our condition in life, is one of the brightest luminaries that shed their light upon its path. And the lower our destined station, the more valuable is its influence: for it is in the path of humble poverty that the thorns and thistles denounced as a portion of the earth's original curse, spring up in their fullest luxuriance. It is upon this condition that the weight of the sentence falls—In the sweat of thy face shalt

* Sunday, March 8, 1846.

thou eat bread, until thou return unto the ground. Therefore, my brethren, in more than one sense it is true, that it is not good for man to be alone. He needs a friend, that sticketh closer than a brother, a friend that loveth at all times; a brother that is born for adversity. But the wise man instructs us that the feeling, and the faithfulness which that feeling cherishes, must be mutual—it must be duly and honestly exchanged:—The man that hath friends, must shew himself friendly. No price is too great to obtain such a treasure; for, as one of our own poets truly states it,

“The world, in purchase of a friend, is gain!”

Ver. 10—13. As it must often be observed, the Psalmist here turns from the contemplation of his own sad reflections upon the fickleness of human nature, to the relief found in prayer and in praise. The ground of his confidence in God was, that his enemy had not been permitted to triumph against him, notwithstanding the rebellion of his son, and the treachery of his confidential servant and of many of his people. And he prays the Lord still to be merciful unto him, and to raise him up again, to restore him to his rightful sovereignty; then, says he, I shall reward them. We are not justified in supposing these last words to convey a threat of vengeance: the whole tenor of David's life forbids this interpretation. His forbearance towards Saul, when he had him in his power, and his extreme grief for the death of his son Absalom, are strong proofs of conscientious humanity in the one case, and of the overwhelming power of the parental feeling in the other. His petition in the 8th verse was fully answered, without having stained his own hands in the blood of the treacherous Ahithophel; and by one of those extraordinary instances of fatuity, by which the guilty soul is sometimes permitted to inflict its own punishment: for we read that when the betrayer of his trusting master saw that his counsel was not followed, he arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city; and put his house-

hold in order, and hanged himself, and died. In this he was a true type of the traitor Judas, who for thirty pieces of silver, the value of which in our coin, is nineteen shillings and fourpence half-penny, sold the life of the kindest friend and master that ever trod the earth: thus verifying in both cases the truth of holy Job's sentence against the wicked:—He is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare. His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors. He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world. The Psalmist concludes as usual with the song of praise, acknowledging that all his mercies flow from the Fount of Mercy; and that as he is upheld by the goodness of his God here, so shall he be admitted to the full fruition of glory hereafter, world without end.

PSALM 42.*

The extreme beauty of this composition has attracted the admiration of every generation of readers. It is the pathetic complaint of the sweet Psalmist, when he was driven out of Jerusalem to the country beyond Jordan, by the rebellion of his son Absalom; when he was shut out from the sacred enjoyment of the public services of the Temple. The Hebrew title to the Psalm states it to have been given to the chief musician, to be by him adapted to the particular way of singing used by the Korahites, who were descendants of the schismatic Korah, and became distinguished singers in the Temple.

Ver. 1—5. It is scarcely in the power of imagination to create a more appropriate simile than this, here chosen by the Psalmist to express his longing desire after the refreshing influences of the divine ordinances of public worship, of which he was now deprived. The thirst of the wild animal, when driven to the almost boundless sandy deserts of the east—that dry and thirsty land where no water is—can be but imperfectly imagined in this country, except by the mariner who has experienced a long privation of this refreshing element of all animated nature.

* See note A at the end of the volume.

Yet such does the Psalmist describe to be his longing after those religious exercises of the Holy Temple, in which his soul had ever found the greatest refreshment, under the cares and sorrows of his eventful life. He was now hunted, like the hart upon the mountains : he had been driven into the desert where the waters of life were not to be found : his infidel foes were daily taunting him with reproaches of his prayerful confidence in the protection of that great Being, who is visible only to the eye of faith : they pointed at him the finger of scorn, derisively asking him, Where is now thy God ? As often therefore, as he thought thereon, in the silence of night, peradventure in the loneliness of his hiding places, his memory would carry him back to those happier hours, when he went with the multitude, and brought them forth into the house of God ;

And, while His praise in grateful songs
Resounded from a thousand tongues,
He, leading on the festal train,
Exulting trod the hallow'd Fane.

Ver. 6—13. Here the Psalmist expostulates with himself against indulging despair, when he could look back upon so many deliverances. For though now his soul is disquieted, past experience should encourage the hope, that hereafter he should be allowed to reflect with gratitude upon his restoration from his exile beyond Jordan, and among the people of Hermon ; admitting that hitherto, among all the terrors that had surrounded him, he remained unhurt : and, borrowing a figure from the furious visitations peculiar to the seas off the Jewish coasts, admits that the waves and storms of divine anger had gone over his head harmless, and that he still experienced the loving-kindness of the Lord, and would continue to sing of Him in the night-season, and make his prayer unto the God of his life. He wondered why he should fear that God had forgotten him ; and in that fear should go heavily, though his enemies continued to trouble him, and to cast in his teeth the

foolishness, as they imagined, of his faith; and daily to taunt him with the question, Where is now thy God? It does not seldom fall to the lot of the Christian, in his pilgrimage through this ever-changing life, that his very virtues make him an object of scorn and hatred:

Envy doth merit as its shade pursue,
And like the shadow, proves the substance true.

Nor is it always to be expected that the soul of the righteous shall be so strengthened in its integrity, as to rise above the vexations and disquietudes produced by its conflicts with the world. The Psalmist, however, instructs us how to bear, how to forbear; how to hope and triumph:—[Read *v.* 14, 15.]

P S A L M 43.

This is generally admitted to be a continuation of the foregoing Psalm, if not originally forming a part of it. It consists of similar language and sentiments throughout, and concludes with the same chorus.

Ver. 1—4. Notwithstanding the prevalent similarity in language and sentiment between this and the preceding Psalm, here is a change of the spirit. David boldly calls upon God no longer to suspend judgment between himself and his persecutors; and, as the counsellor of the innocent party, demands the sentence of supreme justice against them. Give sentence with me, O God; and defend my cause against the ungodly people. Too long have they persecuted my soul, and held me in bondage to their usurped power: too long have they trodden my life down upon the earth, and laid mine honour in the dust: too long have they blasphemed thy Holy name, and put to rebuke thy righteous servant. O deliver me from the tyranny of the deceitful and the wicked! Is it that thy justice slumbereth, while I go so heavily under the oppression of the enemy? Thou, O God, knowest my simpleness, and my faults are not hid from Thee: but Thou knowest also, that while these deny

Thee, and mock thy servant, saying, Where is now thy God? my firm trust is in thy mercy, for Thou only art the God of my strength. Why, then, hast Thou for so long a season cast me off: why hast Thou put me from Thee? I desire only the renewed opportunities of manifesting my faithfulness in the sight of my people. I pray, therefore, that Thou wilt send out thy light and thy truth, that they may lead me, and bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy dwelling: and that I may go unto the altar of God, even unto the God of my joy and gladness: and upon the harp will I give thanks unto Thee, O God, my God! If we look abroad into the world, and mark the prevailing indifference of a large portion of mankind to the public and most sacred duties of our religious profession, we are justified in the conclusion, that it is sometimes needful that they should be deprived of their privileges, in order to impress them with a truer sense of their value. We could scarcely desire a higher authority than the pious King of Israel; and it were impossible to find a brighter example, to teach us the inestimable worth, both to our temporal peace and to our souls' comfort, of the ordinances of public worship. In the days of David they possessed, it is true, the sanction and enforcement of the divine command: From one Sabbath to another shall all flesh come to worship me, saith the Lord. And it is among the Lamentations of the prophet Jeremiah, that the Lord had caused the Sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, had cast off his altar, and abhorred his Sanctuary; and in the indignation of his anger had despised the king and the priest. But we enjoy the privileges of a better Covenant—a Covenant of grace and precious promises; and that is not the least, in value of these promises, which is given to his Church by the great High Priest and Mediator of this Covenant:—Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them. Nevertheless, even under the light of this gracious and glorious dispensation, there are many around us, and some not

far off, who say in their hearts, There is no God; and many others who take the name of Christ, but renouncing his yoke, proclaim by their heathenish lives that they will not have this man to reign over them! My brethren, be ye warned and be ye persuaded, that as surely as the lower creatures of this earth were saved from the deluge of waters, in the ark which God had provided by his servant Noah; so surely is your refuge from the deluge of sin and its inevitable destruction, only to be found in the Ark of the Covenant of Mercy and Grace in Christ Jesus. Be not negligent, therefore, of coming to the altar of your God, even the God of your joy and gladness: for there only, under your souls' heaviness and disquietude, shall ye find the peace that passeth understanding—that peace which the world can neither give nor take away—that peace which the royal but afflicted Psalmist could so well define, and has so powerfully exemplified. [Read *v.* 5, 6.]

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XVII.

PSALM 44.

In the 18th chapter of the second Book of Kings is recorded the insolent message of Sennacherib the king of Assyria unto Hezekiah, when the former having triumphed over "all the fenced cities of Judah," laid siege to Jerusalem. This Psalm is conjectured by a learned expositor, Bishop Patrick, and with good reason, to have been composed by some inspired writer at that fearful juncture of Israel's fate. In the chapter following that referred to, is recorded the marvellous answer to the good king Hezekiah's prayer, in the destruction of 185,000 men of the Assyrian army, and the subsequent massacre of Sennacherib by two of his own sons, while he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his God. It may not, therefore, appear improbable to those who peruse the history contained in these two chapters, that Isaiah himself was the writer of this prayerful Psalm.

Ver. 1—5. The Psalm opens with a confession, that its prayer is prompted and encouraged by the remembrance of the manifested tokens of God's favour to Israel in times of old; when He had delivered her people from the Egyptian bondage, and driven out before them the heathen possessors of Canaan; putting his own chosen heritage into quiet enjoyment of the promised land; acknowledging at the same time, that it was not by their own valour, nor by their own strength, that the people triumphed over their adversaries; but because the Lord had a favour unto them, guiding them by the light of his countenance, upholding them with his own right hand, defending them by his omnipotent arm. Wherefore the inspired penman makes his prayerful confession—Thou art my king, O God: send help unto Jacob! If, brethren, the believers of old could sustain their strong faith, such as is so well attested in Holy Writ, upon the mere traditionary records of God's dealings in favour of his people; how much firmer foundation than they have we, in "the gathered wisdom of six thousand years," whereon to build and to repose our faith in all the Divine pro-

mises! For every page of the Sacred History, every impulse which our thoughts receive from our consciousness of immortality, confirm the assurance that all these records were preserved for our admonition; that we, through faith, and comfort of the Scriptures, having the means of grace, might cherish the hope of eternal glory. It behoves us also to remember, that to whom much is given, of them shall much be required.

Ver. 6—9. From the contemplation of the past, the prophet turns to the future, in full reliance upon all needful aid, and renouncing all self-dependence; because his past experience had shewn that the Lord alone could protect Israel against her inveterate foes, and put them to confusion. Through Him, therefore does she still hope to overthrow her enemies, and in his Name to tread them under, that rise up against her. Her boast, unlike that of the heathen who would overwhelm her, is not in her own strength, but in the faithfulness of God; whose great Name shall be the subject of her grateful praises for ever. Yet we see in the passages which immediately follow, that all this was uttered amid the most alarming dangers, and at a time of almost hopeless extremity; the description of which answers well to the theory, that this Psalm was written on the approach of the Assyrian army towards Jerusalem.

Ver. 10—17. The language with which this passage opens is perfectly true to nature, at such moments as seem to be fraught with insurmountable danger. Such was the position of Jerusalem at this time: for the king of Assyria had previously invaded Samaria, in which the tribes of Manassch and Ephraim dwelt, and had taken the people captive: and this, as the historian relates, because they had not obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and would not hear them nor do them:—From these victories the enemy passed onward towards Jerusalem; and upon one occasion exacted from king Hezekiah three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of

gold; about £300,000 of our money. But the boasting and blasphemy of Sennacherib, were harder to bear than his extortions. The voice of the slanderer and blasphemmer pierced the souls of the pious Israelites, and produced in the mind of the prophet those descriptive similies with which this portion of the Psalm abounds.

Ver. 18—26. It cannot be that in the infliction of punishment for national guilt, the innocent can escape all participation in the just sufferings of the offenders. All Samaria had been guilty of transgressing the covenant of their God; and Jerusalem, although the seat of a just and religious king, was made, up to a certain point, to suffer, the just for the unjust. Hezekiah's exemplary piety is thus recorded in the history of the kings:—He trusted in the Lord God of Israel: he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following Him; but kept his commandments, which the Lord commanded him; and the Lord was with him. Under the rule of a righteous king it may be surmised the people were righteous; and the writer of this Psalm records their general integrity: he makes it the ground of his appeal to the Searcher of hearts on their behalf, that though all this evil be come upon them, they have not forgotten the true God, they have not holden up their hands to any strange God, they have not forgotten the Name of Jehovah, nor behaved themselves frowardly in his covenant; they have not gone astray, like the tribes of Samaria, who were then suffering the just recompense of their rebellion against God, under the Assyrian bondage: but, on the contrary, were suffering persecution for their very faithfulness to the God of their fathers: For thy sake are we killed all the day long, and counted as sheep appointed to be slain. St. Paul quotes this passage (*Rom.* viii, 36,) when pointing to the tribulation, distress, and persecution, which the first preachers of the Gospel of Christ were destined to sustain: but he triumphantly adds, Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that

loved us. To the same God of Mercies the Psalmist appeals, though in a bolder spirit—the Apostle submits to the necessity that is laid upon him: the Prophet deprecates the continued triumph of Israel's adversaries, more in the strains of impatience than of despondency, or even of doubt:—Up, Lord, why sleepest Thou? Wherefore hidest Thou thy face? Awake, and be not absent from us for ever! Forget not our misery and trouble: but arise and help us, and deliver us for thy mercy's sake. For our soul is brought low, even to the dust!

PSALM 45.

The Hebrew Title of this Poem is *A Song of Loves*, and is descriptive of the mystical union that is between Christ and his Church. Many of the Jewish writers admit it to be prophetic of Messiah, and thus it is appropriated in our Church Service for Christmas Day. Some of the later Jews, and some Christian Commentators also, imagine the Psalm to have been composed in celebration of Solomon's marriage with the daughter of Pharaoh: but it is altogether of too high and spiritual a character to admit of this theory. The beauty of the young princess, and the magnificence of the nuptials might have suggested the original idea of this hymn; and perhaps gave a turn to some of the thoughts which enrich the composition: but it is evidently a work of divine inspiration, and its language far above even such a jubilee. The real subject is mysteriously grand, and the author of the Psalm opens it with the acknowledgment that he is moved to it by some irresistible influence. The language of the seventh verse is alone sufficient to silence all doubt as to the subject of this sublime poem.

Ver. 1, 2. This is no common style of opening a work of mere human talent: its abruptness indicates the operative presence of some moving power, whose dictate must be obeyed: and the magnificent exordium is well responded by the dignity and beauty of the language which follows.

Ver. 3—6. The Psalmist ascribes to the Divine Bridegroom of the Church those graces for which, more especially in his now glorified state, He is pre-eminent—his beauty, eloquence, and fortitude. To speak of the personal beauty of the Son of God may at first sight seem to savour too much of familiarity; but

it is used only in a spiritual sense, of which the prophet Ezekiel has given us this eloquent instance, speaking of the coming of Christ and his peaceable dominion—How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! The Psalmist's apostrophe is—Thou art fairer than the children of men. And, further—Full of grace are thy lips, because God hath blessed Thee for ever. Here is a figurative description of the eloquence of Christ; that is, of the power by which his doctrines have been made known throughout the world, in fulfilment of the prophecy, that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (*Isa. xi, 9.*) What follows is a kind of All hail! to the great Captain of our Salvation; indicating the majesty of his progress, the superhuman fortitude of his bearing, the imperishable glory of his cause, the spiritual efficacy of his weapons, and his certain triumph over every foe who shall dispute his power: for the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, is quick and powerful, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. (*Heb. iv.*)

Ver. 7, 8. These two verses, forming an irresistible, prophetic argument of the divine character of the Messiah who should come, are quoted by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews, (c. i,) and introduced by one of the sublimest specimens of reasoning to be found even in the Word of inspiration. The anointing spoken of in the second of these verses is that of the Holy Spirit, and the introduction of the term "thy fellows," evidently denotes, that all the faithful, who hold communion with Christ, are partakers of the same spiritual anointing, though in a less degree, as his members, than that of their glorified Head.

Ver. 9—17. This glowing description of nuptial rejoicings we must consider as a metaphorical hymn, commemorative of

the adoption of the Gentile nations as the Church and Spouse of Christ. Its mysterious character is exceeded only by that extraordinary allegory the Canticles, or Song of Solomon. Here are nevertheless some passages which bear and require an explanatory interpretation. For instance, the spices named in the opening verse are used figuratively to denote the graces of Christ, as diffusing their odour throughout the world, from his throne in the heaven of heavens, for the consolation and blessing of his Spouse the Church, here spoken of as the Queen in a vesture of gold, wrought about with divers colours, and attended by even the daughters of kings among other honourable women, in accordance with the prophecy in another Psalm—All kings shall fall down before Him, all nations shall do Him service. Here follows the instruction of the Husband and the Friend to his newly affianced Bride—Hearken, O Daughter, and consider: forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. As the visible Church of Christ is the offspring of the world, she is counselled that she must now renounce her natural attachment to the world, and the things that are in the world, and centre all her affections in Him who is the Lord her God: for then shall He have pleasure in her beauty; and then shall the riches of all nations be laid at her feet; even the riches of proud Tyrus, which did build herself a strong-hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. (*Zech.* ix, 3.) The remaining verses have respect to the final glorification of Christ's Church, when, being purified from all her outward contracted defilements, she shall appear before the throne of the Majesty on high, in all the beauty of perfect holiness.

Ver. 18. The Psalmist now returns to the object of his exordium, the thoughts with which his soul was inspired concerning the glories of Christ's kingdom: offering his own vow of a perpetual record of the greatness of His Nature, and foretelling that for this cause the people shall give thanks to Him, world without end.

PSALM 46.

It is uncertain whether this Psalm was written by David himself, or by one of the sons of Korah; but the title indicates that it was sung in the public service of the Temple: and its subject is the great triumph obtained over the combined enemies of Israel, which is recorded in 2 *Sam.* viii. It is, in short, a national thanksgiving, in the form of an anthem of praise.

Ver. 1—7. The extraordinary successes achieved by David and his people against their various foes in a continuation of battles, can be understood only by reading the history itself. He subdued the Moabites, until they became David's servants, and brought gifts. He took a thousand chariots, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen, from the king of Zobah, near the river Euphrates. When the Syrians of Damascus came to succour that king, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men; and he smote them again in the valley of salt, and slew eighteen thousand men. And the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went. And David reigned over all Israel, and executed judgment and justice unto all his people. This anthem is certainly worthy of the occasion. It opens with an unreserved acknowledgment that Israel's triumphs have been wrought by the divine arm alone; and that to the manifest presence of the Almighty in the time of their peril, they owe their deliverance from trouble. And the terms in which the writer, in the name of the people, expresses the national confidence in the continued protection of the God of Israel, are sublimely beautiful, bold, and original. He imagines the most violent disruptions of nature, as figurative of the overthrow of Israel's combined enemies; the earth itself being moved, the mountains shaken by strong tempests, the hills carried into the midst of the sea, until the waters thereof rage and swell; yet anticipating from this fearful commotion only good continually; for, continues he, the rivers of the flood thereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most Highest. *She* shall not be removed: for God is in the midst of her, and shall help her in all times

of danger and difficulty: the heathen may make much ado, they may boast of their strength and unite their powers against the chosen people of Jehovah; but his word alone is omnipotent; at his voice the earth itself shall melt away.* Why then do the heathen so furiously rage together? why do the people imagine a vain thing? The Lord of Hosts is with *us*: the God of Jacob is *our* refuge! This verse is repeated at the end as a chorus.

Ver. 8—11. This is an exhortation or call of the people of Jerusalem to each other, that they may keep in mind and meditate upon the wondrous works of the Lord in their behalf; that they may see and confess to the glory of God what He hath wrought for their sake; what destruction He hath brought upon their powerful and revengeful enemies, until He hath made war to cease in all Israel, by an equal spoliation of the weapons of an unholy warfare, and of the arms that wielded them against his chosen ones. At this point Jehovah Himself is suddenly introduced, as claiming the reverential homage of his people, the submission of the heathen, and the acknowledged sovereignty of the whole earth: a bold prosopopœia, upon which the sacred poet would scarcely have ventured, except under some divine impulse. For, however magnificent the whole texture of this anthem, there is no other thought throughout which can be deemed too great for the conception of mere humanity, gifted with the powers of genius. In this verse there is manifested a daring, which must have been prompted and encouraged by some internal and irresistible influence. The Psalm concludes with the repetition of the chorus. The Lord, &c.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

* On the Bible translation of this 6th verse, Bishop Horne's commentary is very appropriate:—"How concise, how energetic, how truly and astonishingly sublime! The kingdom of Christ being twofold, these words may be applied either to the overthrow of heathenism, and the establishment of the Gospel; or to the destruction of the world, and the erection of Messiah's triumphant throne. Conquer, O Lord, all our perverse affections, and reign in us, that we may conquer, and reign with Thee!"

LECTURE XVIII.

PSALM 47.

This Psalm is, throughout, one continued Hallelujah to the praise and glory of God, chiefly for the works of his grace, in the then expected manifestation of Himself in the Person of the promised Messiah. As such, the Church adopts it in her service on the commemoration of Christ's Ascension—that glorious consummation of the promises and expectations on which the hearts of the faithful had reposed through so many ages from the fall of Adam, and the first announcement of God's gracious design to redeem all his posterity from the consequences of that awful transgression. The whole Psalm is therefore to be considered as a prophetic hymn of triumphant exultation.

Ver. 1—4. Taking the Psalm in the sense which I have ascribed to it, and in which the Church uses it, no portion of the entire book can be more appropriately adopted, to express the confident joy of the Christian world, on the commemoration of that great event which completed the Saviour's triumph on earth over the powers of death and hell, solely on our behalf. And if our minds could but take in the vastness of the idea of this conquest, coupling it as we ought to do with a deep reflection and study of the Redeemer's humble life upon earth, his painful ministry, the savage perseverance of those who hunted for his blood, their final success, the scorn He suffered during the few but agonizing hours of his captivity and his ignominious and painful death; remembering too, that this event destroyed the hopes of even his faithful and beloved Disciples, who mournfully acknowledged that they once thought it was He who should have redeemed Israel: if, I say, we could effectually combine and encompass these facts in our mind; how joyfully should we wonder, how cordially should we unite in the exultant shout of self-gratulation, on remembering that the once suffering Redeemer had not only triumphantly risen above the

powers of death and corruption, but had given the last proof of his own power and Godhead, by a visible and glorious ascension into heaven; thus restoring and confirming the feeble faith of his companions, which once had been scarcely stronger than our own; and emboldening them to spread the glad tidings of salvation throughout a hostile world, till even the kings of the earth should bow before the Majesty of the Godhead once manifested in the flesh! O clap your hands together, all ye people! Sing unto God with the voice of melody! For if, as we are entitled to do, by virtue of the everlasting covenant of grace and merey in Christ Jesus, we regard ourselves as the chosen people, elect and precious under the beneficent provisions of that covenant, we must feel and acknowledge, that the Lord hath subdued the people of the heathen nations under our feet; that our own favoured land hath been the chosen instrument under Divine Providence, of sending the banner of the cross into the most benighted corners of the earth; and that there the godless tyrant and the brutalized slave have equally bowed before the mild and enlightening influences of Gospel Truth; and have been taught to embrace and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which it was the gracious errand of the Son of God upon earth, to establish in the heart of every despairing child of Adam. Well is it said then, by the Psalmist, though only in faithful anticipation of the event, that God is gone up with a merry noise; and the Lord with the sound of the trump: for the spread of Christianity, the knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus, is advancing towards the completion of that prophetic declaration of Isaiah, that that knowledge, the knowledge of the Glory of the Lord, shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea: and that even the haughty and the powerful ones of the earth shall become the willing instruments of exalting the Majesty, and enlarging the dominion of Christ's spiritual kingdom—the princes of the people shall themselves be joined unto the people of the God of

Abraham, convinced that He alone is King of kings and Lord of lords. Thus have we compassed the meaning of the remaining portion of this Psalm, which I will now read to you.

[Read *v.* 5—9.]

PSALM 48.

This Psalm, like the preceding one, is also appointed by our Christian Church to be used on one of her high festivals; the celebration of that day on which the promise of God's Holy Spirit was fulfilled to the astonishment of the people of all nations, who heard the gifted Apostles, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. It is from the Day of Pentecost, our Whitsunday, that we may date the laying of the chief corner-stone of our visible Sion; when the labours of her ministry began to extend till she shall compass the round world, and all that therein is. In the spirit of prophecy the Psalmist therefore extols the beauty and strength of the Christian Church.

Vers. 1, 2. Although, my brethren, our hearts are the living Temples of the Holy Ghost, whereunto we may always resort to maintain that communion with our Heavenly Father so needful to our peace, but which is so often interrupted and broken up by the cares, the temptations, and the trials of our passing life; yet it is upon God's Holy Hill, in the City and Temple of his appointed ordinances and sacraments, that we must, at the stated periods of our Sabbatical rest, offer the acceptable services of prayer and praise. And the willing and punctual observance of this duty is no less needful for the maintenance of the spiritual life within us, than it is to shew forth the sincerity of our Christian profession. Thus it is that the Psalmist speaks of the hill of Sion as the joy of the whole earth—that is, the source and fountain of all our individual peace, of national security and prosperity, and of universal concord: inasmuch as even the rulers of the earth are constrained to seek the protection and to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Lord Jehovah; whereby, as the Psalmist here declares, God is known, even in the palaces of our Sion, as a sure refuge, under whatever dangers

may threaten the commonwealth from foreign enmity or domestic treachery.

Ver. 3—6. Bearing in mind that this Psalm is altogether prophetic of the then future and flourishing state of the Christian Church, we must observe how minutely the gifted Seer has described the circumstances which have accompanied the march of the gospel through the heathen world. All its powerful rulers have congregated together against the Lord, and against his Anointed: yet from their violence, they have reaped only fear; from their united strength, only defeat and overthrow; from their pride, only utter annihilation. Their very names have become a standing reproach and a bye-word among succeeding generations. The blasting of the breath of God's anger has scattered the myriads of their armies with the same ease that the winds and waves of the broad sea, when put in motion by the almighty fiat, break in pieces the ships. Of this, my brethren, we had a national experience, in that providential deliverance from the bloody designs of Popery against our Sion in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when the invading fleets of Spain were scattered on the neighbouring coasts like chaff before the wind; when the Lord cast forth his lightnings and tore them, and shot out his arrows and consumed them.

Ver. 7—13. In these verses we have an exemplary excitement to cherish those feelings of grateful pride with which, after many deliverances, we may look abroad upon our native land, and reflect upon her greatness, her power, and her influence among the nations of the earth. And truly we may rejoice and be glad, because of the righteous judgments of the Lord wrought in our special behalf. But the great bulwark of our strength is, as it should be of our confidence and devotion, that the Ark of the Lord, the depositary of his Covenant of Grace and Mercy in Christ Jesus, resteth upon our Sion: and that here the Lord hath promised his blessing, and life for evermore. Nor shall we indulge an unholy pride, if in thus gratefully sur-

veying our privileges, we point with exultation to their visible evidences, the consecrated shrines in which, if our hearts be right, we may worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; and thus secure to ourselves the continuance of his favourable regard. We may say truly and proudly—Walk about Sion, and go round about her, and tell the towers thereof:—mark well her bulwarks; set up her houses of worship; that is, take notice of them, that ye may tell or make it known to distant nations and future generations. For the God whom we here serve is the Lord Jehovah—He is our God for ever and ever—He shall be our guide through the painful and uncertain pilgrimage of time—He is our hope and consolation in the certain prospect of death.

PSALM 49.

The solemn exhortation with which this Psalm opens, is addressed universally to the thoughtless and the unbelieving—those to whom a lesson of wisdom is needful, to divert them from a foolish dependence on the goods of this life for anything like substantial peace and happiness—for such are to be found equally among the high and low, the rich and poor. The arguments employed by the sacred penman are as powerful as they are true; but though obvious to every thoughtful mind, they require to be enforced upon the attention of all. On the other hand, the Psalmist gives the example of his own faith to strengthen our's in the final resurrection to a just recompense of reward; warning us against either envying or fearing those, whose ungodly life so clearly foreshews what shall be their latter end.

Ver. 1—4. As it was our Saviour's practice to give utterance to his most valuable and important lessons of wisdom in the form of parables, so the Psalmist sets out with declaring that he will listen to the voice of inspiration, and utter those dark sayings which shall need the study, and attention, and reflection of those who hear or read, in order that they may be more firmly retained in the memory, and more deeply impressed upon the heart. And to give at once a correct notion of their importance, he claims the attention of all people, of all that

dwell in the world; high and low, rich and poor, one with another; for that, with his mouth he is about to utter wisdom, and to give his own ear to understanding. This is the true course of acquiring knowledge, if men were wise in choosing their instructors. Too much of our attention is however usually given to the passing occurrences and pursuits of this life, that we may become knowing and learned on such subjects as promise the greatest worldly advantage. But the lessons of the Psalmist are on that wisdom which proceeds from the faith that maketh not ashamed.

Ver. 5. Such is the confidence which the faithful cherish in the evil day, when they are surrounded and beset by enemies, who, relying upon their worldly wealth or power, think themselves secure of their malicious will against the humble and unoffending servants of God. It is often seen that they have their day of triumph, though it is brief and unsatisfactory. The concluding sentence of this verse is imperfectly translated—instead of the wickedness of my heels, we may read, the wickedness of them that follow my heels; whom, however, the Psalmist could hold in contempt—Wherefore should I fear?

Ver. 6—11. It seems scarcely possible, that in a Christian land any should be so foolish as to trust their all to the security afforded by the possession of worldly goods: yet we know that the multitude of riches is often a snare to the possessors, a temptation to forgetfulness of their actual condition, their equal liability with their poorer brethren to the awful sentence, This night shall thy soul be required of thee! But no man can deliver even a brother who is thus self-doomed to perdition. He must for ever let alone the issue of that awful change: for the soul of man, that portion of our nature upon which the eternal and invisible God has stamped his own Image, is of too great worth in His sight to be thus redeemed from the destruction brought on it by its own waywardness and rebellion. The precious blood of the Son of God Himself has been already shed

for the redemption of the penitent sinner, as well as of the faithful and obedient disciple; and there is none other name under heaven by which we can be saved, but only the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. All men may see that those who have the greatest share of worldly wisdom die, and perish from off the earth, together with the ignorant and foolish: yet it is also seen that many of these live regardless of this certain but appalling change in their condition; as though they could not be separated from that which is here the delight of their eyes, and upon which they have set the desire of their hearts. Wherefore they call their possessions after their own names, as fondly but foolishly hoping themselves to enjoy them from generation to generation. Here, however, is the decisive reflection—

Ver. 13—14. As far as our connection with this world and its concerns shall last, we may abide in those honours, we may keep possession of the riches we acquire: but the termination of that connection by death, places us in no better condition as to the world, than that of the beasts that perish, some in our using, some for our use. But it is the foolishness of unbelieving souls, to delude themselves with a daily practical denial of the awful truth, which is nevertheless written in every wrinkle of their brow, and made visible to themselves in every movement of their frame. This is the way of them; yet so contagious is their evil example, that notwithstanding their fate, their names are honoured and their wisdom applauded by their posterity, who are enriched perhaps by the possession of that which had cost *them* their souls! yet they themselves meanwhile lie in the grave, death gnawing upon them, until their beauty shall consume away in the sepulchre, and even their memory perish from the thoughts of men. They must nevertheless arise to the resurrection of the judgment: and then will it be seen that the righteous shall have domination over them in the morning; that is, from the opening dawn of that eternal day of brightness which is reserved for the people of God.

Ver. 15—19. Here the Psalmist breaks forth into a strain of exultation in his own sure and certain hope of surviving the bonds of mortality, and finally triumphing over all his enemies, temporal and spiritual. And, like an Israelite indeed, he seeks to impart to others a portion of his own happy confidence. He bids us not to be afraid, as though, seeing our neighbour made rich, and his imaginary glory increasing, we should infer from thence that he is the peculiar favourite of Heaven, and ourselves the forgotten outcasts of God's providential care: for if his worldly wealth is the be-all and end-all of the rich man's confidence, mark the end thereof; for he shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth, neither shall his pomp follow him; though while he liveth, he counteth himself a happy man: for he finds that the world around him is always ready to lavish upon him its unmeaning courtesies, to flatter him with its empty homage, and to share in his patronising smile. This is the experience which constitutes what is mistaken for happiness in this life, and which tends to shut out the thoughts of futurity; while it is imperceptibly wearing away the uncertain portion of time which is here allotted to us all, for the sole purpose of working out our own salvation, under the covenanted terms of that gracious promise of a never-ending life of glory and honour, and unfading riches, which have been purchased with the inestimable price of the blood of our crucified Redeemer. And whether men will hear this truth, or whether they will forbear, it is not only enforced upon their understanding by the ministration of the Gospel throughout the Christian world, but it is also imprinted on their hearts—for, I will put my law in their inward parts, and will write it in their hearts, saith the Lord Jehovah. No man therefore can plead ignorance of the truth—it is interwoven with his entire nature. But we are easily flattered into an habitual forgetfulness that here we have no abiding city; and we are as much encouraged to it by our fellow-men as by our own averseness to reflection: for so long

as thou doest well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee, and we are too apt to love the praise of men, rather than to seek the praise of God; though this is a possession above all price, while that is equally worthless and deceitful: for the Psalmist boldly declares the Christian verity, that worldly honour too often obscures the human understanding; yet all who are so beguiled from the simplicity that is in Christ and in his Eternal Word, shall follow the generation of their fathers, that is, of those who have suffered themselves to be deceived in like manner: and shall never see light. "The sum of the whole matter is, that it can profit a man nothing to gain the whole world for a momentary possession, if after all he lose his own soul; and finally become a cast-away, for want of that holy and heavenly wisdom, which distinguishes him above the brutes, in his life and at his death."*

Glory be to the Father, &c.

* Bp. Horne.

LECTURE XIX.

PSALM 50.

It is doubtful whether this Psalm was given by David to Asaph, the chief of those who had been appointed to minister before the Ark of the Lord, or whether it was written by Asaph himself; a doubt which arises from the difference between the Hebrew title and the Chaldee paraphrase. It is now, however, of little moment. As it is in the Church of Christ, so it was among the professed worshippers of God in Israel. Intermingled with the many sincere observers of the Law which was given by Moses, there were those who trusted solely in the sufficiency of their legal sacrifices, and were punctual in their ceremonial duties, who lived nevertheless in the total neglect of all moral obligation. To reprove and to warn this class of hypocrites, appears to be the purport of this sublime effusion: and nothing can be conceived more awfully impressive than the opening portion of it, taken in connexion with the judicial denunciations that follow.

Ver. 1—15. In the Name of Jehovah Himself, as apparent in the 5th verse, the Psalmist opens a scene of terror and grandeur, not to be presented in reality until the final judgment. Nevertheless, the Lord, even the Most Mighty God, hath already spoken: his commands have gone forth from the creation of the world to the present hour, from his own awful Presence, from the lips of his prophets, and in the authoritative voice of his own beloved Son. The whole world, from the east unto the west, has been called by the never-silent trump, which proclaims his Will, his Providence, and his Grace. And forasmuch as the Ark of his first covenant with man was pitched upon the hill of Sion which he loved, it is from thence that He hath appeared in perfect glory, clothed with all those attributes which constitute the supreme beauty of holiness, the divine perfections. And He shall come again: He shall not keep silence: neither shall He appear under circumstances that can leave the sinner in doubt of his omnipotent sway over all created things. Yet, notwithstanding all the warnings which

shall then have vibrated in the ears of a thousand generations, the great day of the Lord will come upon all as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Then shall the hosts of heaven, and the redeemed of the earth,—those that have faithfully kept the covenant of their God,—be gathered together, to declare his righteousness, to bear witness to the justice of his judgments, and by their acclamations and hallelujahs confirm the testimony of all created things from the beginning of the world, that God Himself is the Judge of all; whether in heaven or in earth, visible or invisible; whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers. Yet doth Jehovah continually warn his people of the coming of that great and terrible day, and propound his free mercies to all who will hear and fear, and turn themselves unto the Lord. Hear, O my people, and I will speak:—Think not that I delight in the blood of your sacrifices, though I claim these as the outward testimonies of your faithfulness. I will not therefore reprove thee for the mere omission of these duties: thou knowest that in these oblations thou bringest Me only that which is mine own; that which I have given thee plenteously to possess and to enjoy. The beasts of the forest and of the field, the cattle upon the hills, the fowls upon the mountains—all are mine. If thou offer these things unto Me, what givest thou, or what receive I at thine hands? If thou be punctually obedient to the outward conditions of my covenant, what doest thou unto Me? or if thou transgress, what doest thou against Me? I will not accept those feigned oblations of an uncircumcised heart; neither will I reprove him whose heart is right towards Me, because his sacrifices and burnt-offerings are not alway before Me. The oblations I require are those of the heart and of the spirit: my son give Me thine heart: the sacrifices in which I delight are a broken spirit, a broken and a

contrite heart. The silent aspirations of these are as incense in my sight; whether they float around the throne of my glory on the subdued melody of the contrite vow of the wandering but returning sinner, or on the more gladsome notes of praise and thanksgiving. Thus, if thou call upon Me in time of trouble, I will hear thee, and thou shalt praise Me. But here follows the awful contrast—the detection, and exposure, and denunciation of the hypocrite.

Ver. 16—23. Conscience is the still small voice of God within us, which will sometimes enforce a hearing from those who set at nought all his written counsel, and will none of his reproof: and if there be one sinner above all others, to whom that voice is most obnoxious, and by whom it must most frequently be reproached; it is the hypocritical professor of piety, whose chief fellowship is nevertheless with the works of darkness: for his very profession must necessarily lead to occasional reflection; it must bring him into contact with the written Law of God, and it must sometimes produce a momentary self-condemnation; and though it be but momentary, and the call of self-examination speedily dismissed—go thy way for this time—yet to the ungodly, God hath spoken in his Holiness, and in the Majesty of his Power:—Why dost thou preach my laws, and takest my covenant in thy mouth; whereas thou hatest to be reformed; and hast cast my words behind thee? How many do we see around us, whose true character is here painted in truthful colours! As the Jews of old boasted of themselves, We be Abraham's seed, and therefore safe within the inclosure of God's covenant with Abraham, however their lives might disgrace their birth; so there are multitudes who take shelter under the outward profession of Christianity, yet in works deny the Lord who bought them. And these are not to be found only among the hypocritical Pharisees, who make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments; in other words, the demure, sleek-haired, downcast

pietists; whose very looks proclaim, Stand apart, for I am holier than thou! No—there are thousands within the pale of our own Church, whose lives are at utter variance with even the cold formality of an occasional Sabbath-day attendance at the House of God; professedly to render thanks for the great benefits received at his hands, to set forth his most worthy praise, to hear his most Holy Word, and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul. For, brethren, reflect a moment. Know we none, whose dishonesty or covetousness would fit him for the consenting companion of the thief? or none who are willing partakers with the adulterers? or none whose mouths speak wickedness, or whose tongues set forth deceit? or none who will sit and speak against his brother, or who under the slightest temptation would slander his own mother's son? Hear then the judgment of the heart-searching God upon all such workers of iniquity:—These things hast thou done; and I held my tongue; and thou thoughtest wickedly that I am even such a one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set before thee the things that thou hast done. Happy are we, brethren, if in the midst of a career of guilt, the Spirit of Grace thus vouchsafe to reprove us. Such would be indeed a special act of mercy—a working out of the tender exhortation which follows:—O consider this, ye that forget God; lest I pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you! However acceptable the outward acts of our devotion to God, we have the example of Christ, that to do his will is better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices; a doctrine which was thus anticipated by the inspired Psalmist:—Whoso offereth Me thanks and praise, he honoureth Me; and to him that ordereth his conversation right, will I shew the salvation of God. I have dwelt upon this Psalm, brethren, at unusual length; for I know not, in the whole compass of the sacred volume, a single portion more calculated to inspire wholesome reflection, if perused with an earnest and humble desire on the

part of the reader, to acquaint himself now with God, and be at peace.

PSALM 51.

There has never been a difference of opinion among expositors upon the melancholy occasion of composing this penitential Psalm. The awful fall of David in the matter of Uriah, is a blot in the life of the anointed king of Israel, which he has himself perpetuated by this record of his contrition; and which was penned after the visit of the prophet Nathan, by the command, and in the Name of God; until which time it appears that David had continued in his guilt without compunction. The beautiful parable by which his self-condemnation was brought about, is given in the second book of Samuel, (c. xii;) but it was not until the thunder of the awful charge had reached his self-deceived heart—Thou art the man!—that he was awakened to a sense of his guilt.

Ver. 1—4. It is evidently in the right spirit, that the conscious sinner here approaches his God to sue for pardon. He must of necessity first have a strong reliance upon the divine goodness and mercy, and a conviction of his own responsibility for the violation of the holy commandment, before he can fly to the refuge open to him in sincere prayer; and to this refuge he cannot approach with any hope of acceptance, while he trusts in his own shadow for the concealment of his guilt. David therefore approaches his Maker and Judge with the acknowledgment of his faults, and the confession that his sin is ever before him: though, feeling that the weight of his offence consisted in its being known only to God at the time—as the prophet had warned him—“Thou didst it secretly”—and though he pleads that against God, and God only, he had sinned, and done this evil in his sight; yet this Psalm, as we are instructed by an ancient expositor,* was “delivered to the Precentor, that is, the master of the symphonies of the Tabernacle, that it might be publicly chanted.” Here is an instance of humility worth considering: for however earnest and sincere we may be in the confession of our sins before God, we mar the perfectness of our

* Amyraldus *in loco*.

contrition, if we yield to the temptation of fearing the reproach of men. The efficacy of a good man's prayer in our behalf may thereby be lost: the beneficial effects of a pious example must thereby be annulled. It is not therefore with this reservation that we may interpret the words of the Psalmist—Against Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.

Ver. 5—8. Inherited guilt is no plea for actual transgressions of the divine law, by those who have been instructed in that law; for its most prominent doctrine is, that God is the searcher of hearts, and that therein He requireth truth and purity; teaching us this doctrine of wisdom by the secret influences of his Holy Spirit: this is alluded to by the act of purification under the ceremonial ordinances; and by this operation of the Spirit, the penitent sinner is confident that he shall be cleansed and enlightened, and restored to peace and joy in believing.

Ver. 9—19. These verses present an alternation of prayers and vows, and a renewed confession that his faith rests not in the efficacy of sacrifices and burnt-offerings: but the most remarkable passage is the closing prayer in behalf of his people, lest the divine anger on account of his own sin should fall upon Jerusalem. For this he had reason to fear from the denunciation of the prophet Nathan, who had forewarned him that the sword should never depart from his house; that the Lord would raise up evil against him; and that he would do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun, because of the secret sin which David had committed.

PSALM 52.

The historical circumstances which gave rise to this Psalm are detailed at length in the exposition on the 109th. This Psalm bears a more personal character; and whether applied to Saul, or to his wicked herdsman Doëg the Edomite, is a powerful ironical proof of those who would curse them whom God hath not cursed.

Ver. 1—6. This bold reprehension of the tyrant is not uttered by the Psalmist in the confidence of his own power to defend himself; but rests solely upon his reliance on the continued goodness of God, who had so often rescued him from impending perils: and he had encountered none greater than that which now threatened him, from the treachery of Doëg and the malice of Saul; when having found a brief shelter in Nob, the city of the Priests, the enraged king revenged himself upon them by the slaughter of eighty-five of the sacred band; one only escaping to carry the sad tidings to Hareth, where David was then concealed. The language in which he reproaches his murderous betrayer is strictly appropriate, for he ascribes to the tongue of wickedness the effects which had been completed by the sword—with lies thou cuttest like a sharp razor—that false tongue, which delighted itself in unrighteous speeches, in the utterance of lies, and especially in such poisonous language as may do hurt unto others, shall bring destruction on the destroyer: God shall avenge the murder of his unoffending servants: He will annihilate the guilty slanderer, and root him out of the land of the living: and that too in the sight of those who have been the sufferers by his wickedness.

Ver. 7—10. However the pious mind may rejoice in the punishment of the ungodly and the sinner, yet the infliction of the divine judgment, must impress the beholder with an awful fear, even while upbraiding the guilty with their impiety and infidelity. Yes, even the righteous shall fear, when they witness the fate of hardened ungodliness—the man who trusting in his own strength, his own wealth, or power, renounced all allegiance to the King of Heaven and earth, and encouraged his own heart in the pursuit of its wicked desires. But this very fear will tend to strengthen the righteous man in his faith and integrity of purpose; feeling as he must his own secure position, while his trust is in an almighty arm, an all-just Judge of his life, an all-merciful Arbitrator of his temporal and

eternal fate. To this sentiment, the Psalmist gives expression in terms of great poetical beauty, while his feelings urge him on to a grateful avowal of his determined perseverance in the ways of holiness:—As for me, I am like a green olive-tree in the house of my God: my trust is in the tender mercy of God for ever and ever. I will always give thanks unto Thee for that Thou hast done: and I will hope in Thy name, for Thy saints like it well.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XX.

PSALM 53.

This is nearly in words, and totally in its meaning, a repetition of the 14th Psalm, which formed the subject of a Lecture in its due order.

PSALM 54.

This Psalm commemorates one of David's most signal deliverances from one of the greatest treacheries he had experienced—even the betrayal of his presence to Saul, by the inhabitants of Keilah, which place he had by his valour saved from destruction by the Philistines, the common enemy of all Israel. At this time he is supposed to have meditated this prayerful Psalm, and afterwards to have committed it to writing, with the addition of the two concluding verses, which are a thanksgiving, and only appropriate when the danger had passed away.

Ver. 1—5. This entire portion of the Psalm forms only a text, from which, by a suitable meditation upon it, we may derive a greater degree of edification than it promises at first sight. No prayer was ever uttered from a devout heart, which could not, at some period of every man's life, be adopted with advantage; for human experience, however it may vary in kind and degree of suffering, partakes much of the same character—a mixture of pleasure and pain, of sweet and bitter, of what we call good and what we think evil. This was powerfully and impressively exemplified in the life of David, though throughout its course, he was manifestly an object of the divine care and love. He was anointed in his very youth by a chosen prophet of the Lord to the highest earthly dignity ever bestowed on even one of God's peculiar people. He was raised by divine appointment, from the humble station of a shepherd boy, to be supreme ruler over the heaven-favoured seed of Abraham. He was the second only in order upon whom the title of king was conferred: for Saul was the first king appointed, and he was

given to the people in the Lord's anger ; for they had demanded of the prophet Samuel that Saul should be their king, merely because the children of Ammon had made war against them, under the controul of a king. On which occasion the prophet Samuel thus reprov'd them :—When ye saw that Nahash the king of the Ammonites came against you, ye said unto me, Nay, but a king shall reign over us, when the Lord your God was your King. Now, therefore, behold the king whom ye have desired : and behold, the Lord hath set a king over you ! The history of Saul's unhappy reign is too well known to require any remark upon it : but it was long before the close of his days that David was anointed to be his successor—a proof that the Lord Jehovah had condemned the iniquitous son of Kish to a brief and troubled reign. And it was in the interval between David's anointing, and his succeeding to the throne, that he suffered so many hardships, and incurred so many dangers ; and it is to his paramount piety during that trying period, that we owe many of the most touching and sublime compositions contained in the Book of Psalms. Moreover, if we reflect upon the occasion of the one now under consideration, the fervour of his faith and the depth of his resignation must be obvious to the most careless observer. Nothing in language can exceed the intensity of the prayer with which this short Psalm opens. David appears before our eyes on bended knees and with uplifted hands, as if pouring out from the depths of his heart, a supplication for succour under some immediate peril ; and such must have been frequently his position, under the sleepless persecution of Saul and his followers :—Save me, O God, for thy name's sake, and avenge me in thy strength. Hear my prayer, O God, and hearken unto the words of my mouth ! A new set of enemies had risen up against him ; even a people whom he had rescued from the devouring sword of the Philistines, were eager to deliver him into the power of his merciless pursuer. They were strangers to him, though he

had come forward in their hour of distress to defend them, and by his valour had enabled them to defeat their invading foes. Nothing is too base for the human heart in its unregenerate state: it still justifies the description given of it by Moses in the days of Noah:—God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually: and as it was in the beginning, so it is now, and ever shall be. And he who innocently suffers from the malice of a treacherous foe, has no other refuge, and needs none else, than that to which the pious David fled in his extremity:—Behold, God is my helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul. In this last passage the Psalmist evidently refers to the faithfulness of his beloved friend Jonathan; who upon this occasion also, when David had fled from the traitorous inhabitants of Keilah, sought him out in a wood in the wilderness of Ziph, and comforted him with the assurance that Saul should not discover him; and thereupon David and Jonathan made a covenant before the Lord. Our Heavenly Father sees fit to dispense his love to his chosen ones not seldom by human agency; and David was not left without the support of a friend, nor without the consolation that the Lord would uphold them that upheld his soul in the day of his adversity. But he foresaw also that the divine protection of himself and his friends must involve the destruction of his enemies; and it is no violation of the best principles of our nature, or of the purest precepts of religion, to hope for the overthrow of an ungodly enemy, when it is the only alternative of the ruin and loss of a virtuous and devoted friend. Such unquestionably was the feeling which prompted the conscientious aspiration of David, that the Lord might reward evil unto his enemies, and destroy them in his wrath.

Ver. 6, 7. As it has been before stated, these two verses are an added thanksgiving, upon the answer which God had vouchsafed to his earnest prayer for deliverance; for it is related

in the history of these transactions, that the people of Ziph were equally willing with the people of Keilah, to minister to Saul's undying thirst for the blood of David, and again betrayed the unoffending fugitive. But God's providential care of his faithful servant was signally manifested at the moment of his greatest danger; for when there was only a mountain between his little band of faithful followers and the army of the king, the latter was suddenly called away to the defence of his own dominions, by an unexpected invasion of the Philistines: wherefore the mountain was thereafter called Sela-hammalekoth, that is, the stone of division. And the terms of David's thanksgiving upon this occasion are of a peculiar character, like that of his deliverance; for this was the greatest and almost the last of his perils. The eye of his faith was now strengthened, and he could look onward through the vicissitudes of time and fortune to the not distant period, when he should be led by God's right hand to the peaceable possessions of his appointed kingdom:—The offering of a free heart will I then give Thee, O Lord, and praise thy Name for its unspeakable comfort—the blessings of freedom and tranquillity; the blessings of a just reign over a faithful and emancipated people; the blessings of thy protection and guidance, under whatever changes and chances I may experience in the future dispensations of thy Providence: for every past manifestation of thy loving-kindness towards me leaves the conviction, that Thou wilt fulfil all thy gracious promises in thy servant's behalf: and now, Thou hast delivered me out of all my trouble; and mine eye hath seen the fulfilment of its desire upon mine enemies.

P S A L M 55.

There is not, perhaps, another among the Psalms, in which the personal character of the *man* David is so finely and so clearly delineated as in this. The prophet Samuel hath left upon record a picture of the youthful shepherd's appearance when he stood among his brethren to be anointed king of Israel: He was ruddy,

and withal of a beautiful countenance. So does this Psalm reflect the graces of the spirit that dwelt within; those graces which in the New Testament are proclaimed to be the fruits of the Holy Spirit, produced in the regenerate heart—gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. We have already in the commentary on the 41st Psalm, dwelt at some length on the treachery of Ahithophel, David's false friend and counsellor: but the language of this Psalm gives us another view of the feelings of the betrayed monarch under this severe trial. It seems to imply that it was written at the commencement of that rebellion, when he first spied unrighteousness and strife in the city; and which filled him with painful reflections on the past, and fearful forebodings of the future: all of which are recorded in language of the greatest force and beauty.

Ver. 1—3. As in the preceding Psalm and many others, it is here seen that David's habitual practice was, to sanctify all his complaints by prayer; to propitiate the ear of the Almighty by humbly supplicating attention, before he ventured to make known the ground of his appeal to the mercy-seat. This is a becoming mode of approaching the Deity upon all occasions: for though all our thoughts and all our circumstances are known to him long before, yet must we plead our wants and sufferings, if we would have them removed; and to make our pleading acceptable, we must clothe our spirit of heaviness in the admissible garment of prayer. The rebellion of his son Absalom was probably the severest trial of the father's eventful life; for he appears to have cherished a strong affection for this undutiful child: and this may in some measure account for the tenderness of the expressions used in the opening verses of the prayer: Take heed unto me and hear me, how I mourn in my prayer, and am vexed.* There is no emotion like this, discoverable in any of his prayers directed against a common

* The distresses and dangers to which we are subject are hardly remediable, when they who by intimate conversation know our nature, and to whom we have communicated our purposes, counsels, and designs, prove treacherous and false to us, and concur with the envy and malice of our enemies: and as the danger is then almost inevitable, so the grief and agony that attend it are sharper and more troublesome than the danger. It bereaves us of the composure, and temper, and serenity of mind, which usually relieve us in all other accidents. But our comfort is, though we are least able to help ourselves in such exigencies, we have an Helper, if we call faithfully upon Him, who sees the pangs we suffer, the agony and fear we endure, and hears the just voice of our lamentation. *Earl of Clarendon on the Psalms.*

enemy. The Psalmist is evidently absorbed in the deepest grief while thinking of the ingratitude of his own son; from which he turns for a moment only, to contemplate the rising dangers threatened by the malicious and mischievous designs of his ungodly subjects, who have been corrupted from their allegiance: for in this pathetic manner he prolongs his complaints:—

Ver. 4—8. These passages form a touching lamentation or elegy, on David's remembrance, perhaps, of past promises of filial love and allegiance, now abruptly cut off for ever. Our own immortal poet has left us the just reflection,

How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is,
To have a thankless child!

And there is evidently in all this outpouring of the Psalmist's heart a deeper feeling than could have been awakened by any occurrence less afflictive than the rebellion of a son. A horrible dread of some undefined evil had seized upon his spirit, as though he thought that this, the greatest suffering he had yet known, must be speedily followed by some greater; and he does not therefore resort to prognostics of the punishment that shall befall the offender, as upon many other occasions; but seems lost in his own thoughts of utter despondency; only wishing himself far away from the scene of this bitter strife, and once more in the wilderness, where he had so often found shelter from his alien foes. O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I flee away, and be at rest. The Psalmist knew, however, that the hands of a leader are weak without those of his followers. His thoughts therefore turn to the seditious supporters of his ungrateful son.

Ver. 9—11. The tongue is truly described by St. James as a world of iniquity; and when men are banded together in an unrighteous cause, it is the chief instrument in working out national or general corruption. Wherefore David prays that the tongues of his unfaithful subjects may be destroyed, that is,

confounded, and that thus the rebels may be divided in their counsels. In the use of this expression the Psalmist may have had an eye to the presumptuous building of Babel, when the Lord saw that nothing else would restrain the people of that day from any thing they had imagined to do, but the confounding of their language; thus causing them to separate in small bodies over all the face of the earth. For David enumerates those evils which are chiefly the fruits of an unbridled tongue: unrighteousness and strife; mischief and sorrow; wickedness, deceit, and guile, dwelt within the walls, and went not out of their streets. It is chiefly, however, upon his treacherous counsellor Ahithophel that the astonished king vents the bitterness of his wounded feelings.

Ver. 12—16. Nothing could shew more plainly than this language the confiding, generous spirit of David. The one whom he had more trusted, and treated with more of friendly familiarity, than all the other servants of the state, was the foremost to lift his heel against an indulgent master, and to foster an unnatural rebellion which threatened his throne and his life. And who can wonder at the awful imprecation, to which David's painful reflections upon the past and present conduct of his unworthy servant directed his thoughts in the end? Prayer and praise, however, claim their turn in the heart of the mourner.

Ver. 17—20. David here makes up his mind that whatever may be the issue of the fearful contest now before him, he will not forget past mercies, nor fail in his duty to the God of his salvation; but will be yet more instant, and earnest, and importunate in his sacrifices of prayer and thanksgiving; and upon this he builds his trust, that the Lord will yet hear him, and bring down his enemies; and the more so, because of the hardness of their hearts in not fearing God, and not turning from their evil ways.

Ver. 21, 22. These verses are plainly applicable only to the

traitor Ahithophel, in their primary sense: yet they are equally descriptive of the conduct of Judas towards his divine Master. It was by the highest token of affection that this man betrayed our Lord into the hands of his murderers: it was by the treachery of the tongue that David's false servant deceived him into a boundless and undeserved confidence. And there is scarcely any other difference in the guilt of the two traitors, than the characters of the masters they forsook. Each was prompted to his unholy work by the same evil spirit; each yielded to the deceitful prospect of future gain; each was the victim of his own guilty deed; and each was doomed to be the executioner of God's righteous vengeance upon himself.

Ver. 23—25 Here is an earnest exhortation to all men, including ourselves, brethren, that we abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good; that we hold fast our religious profession without wavering, whether suffering or temptation assail us; for either is a burthen to our frail nature: but the Psalmist teaches us, and he is a teacher of no brief experience, that if we cast that burthen upon the Lord, He will nourish us; and in proportion to our faith will be our ever-present Supporter; and will not finally suffer us to fall, *for ever!* But as to the unrighteous, the blood-thirsty, and deceitful, they shall not live half their days, ere they shall, by some unseen workings of God's Providence, be hurled into the pit of destruction. David's pious resolve is therefore worthy of our adoption, whatever be our experience; whether the tide of life is gliding past our feet, with a smiling and unruffled surface; or whether it is agitated by the tempests of an adverse fate: or against the deceitfulness which may attend a life of undisturbed prosperity; or against the terrors which we sometimes experience from the ills that flesh is heir to; the peace that passeth understanding shall sustain our steps, if we practically adopt the Psalmist's faith—Nevertheless, my trust shall be in Thee, O Lord!

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XXI.

PSALM 56.

This and the four following Psalms have the same title in the Hebrew, and are chiefly records of David's hopes and fears under the persecution of Saul. And his sufferings are herein very forcibly depicted, as arising out of the treacherous conduct of those by whom he was surrounded, and his own totally defenceless condition.

Ver. 1—4. No perils to which human life is subject can be greater or more imminent than those which at various times threatened the life of the unoffending David, from the moment it was known to Saul that the young son of Jesse had been anointed by a prophet of the Lord, to succeed him in the throne of Israel. Yet, as he pleads in the 131st Psalm, the humble dependent upon God's power and providence, never dreamed of forestalling in point of time the divine purposes. I do not, he says, exercise myself in great matters, which are too high for me. No—the most prominent of all his virtues, and which was ever in action, was his humility; and this, as it led him to acknowledge God in all his thoughts, ever prompted him to the expression of his feelings in prayer or praise. And it is no ground of reproach that the prayers of David are so often mingled with complaint; for this is the natural order of human thought: God knows our wants and desires, our sufferings and privations, but we are not therefore forbidden to name them: and how greatly does it enhance the value of the Psalmist's legacy of exemplary and practical piety, that we know the occasions which prompted these earnest outpourings of his spirit before God. The great Apostle exhorts us, in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to let our requests, that is, the motives to, and the objects of our requests, be made known unto God. And we are reminded elsewhere,

that if we ask and receive not, it is because we ask amiss. David implores the mercy of God in an hour when he is apprehensive of becoming the victim of merciless men, who go about to devour him, who are daily fighting and troubling him, who daily take in hand to swallow him up: and those enemies were numerous and powerful, while he himself was alone and unprotected, as far as human friendship and faithfulness were concerned. But how beautifully simple is the expression of his awakening confidence, after the utterance of his prayer and complaint:—Nevertheless, though I am sometime afraid, yet put I my trust in Thee: and this confidence gradually strengthens into a decisive boldness of purpose, to which it were impossible to give utterance in more elevated language—I will praise God because of his word, that is, his word of promise to the predestined king of Israel: I have put my trust in God, and will not fear what flesh can do unto me!

Ver. 5—8. One of the sharpest trials of human virtue is inflicted by the perversion of our harmless words and intentions by malicious slander; and in proportion to the conscious integrity of the sufferer is the sharpness of the poisoned arrow. We see in several of the Psalms that this was a frequent subject of David's complaint; and here as elsewhere he derives consolation from his faith in the all-searching knowledge and perfect justice of his God:—Shall they escape for their wickedness? Thou, O God, in thy displeasure shalt cast them down, even in the time of proud confidence in their united strength against thy servant; while they hold together, and keep themselves close, in the stealthy pursuit of their murderous designs against his soul. The conclusion of this appeal is exquisitely touching:—Thou knowest my forced wanderings, Thou hearest my frequent groans, Thou seest the throbbings of my heart under every awakened fear, until mine eyes overflow with excess of anguish: O let not these visible evidences of my suffering vanish into air: put my tears into thy bottle, for abiding testimonies of

the cruelties of mine enemies! Are not these things noted in thy book?

Ver. 9—13. It is a divine promise to the faithful, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, that their prayers to the throne of grace shall not be unanswered; for that as long as they do those things that are pleasing in the sight of God, making their requests known to Him by humble supplications, then shall their light break forth as the morning, and their righteousness shall go before them: they shall call, and the Lord shall answer; they shall cry, and He shall say, Here I am! (c. lviii.) David's experience had taught him to rely upon the all-sufficient aid of Jehovah in every time of his peril; yet he looks for the protection of the divine arm only in answer to his prayers:—Whensoever I call upon Thee, then shall mine enemies be put to flight: this I know, for God is on my side. And his confidence impels him to a repetition of those strong expressions which occur in the first division of the Psalm, and to the determination in every future extremity to give the glory of his deliverance and his safety unto God; in the firm faith that hitherto he had been preserved from falling, with the merciful design that he should be finally redeemed from the thralldom of persecution and treachery, to walk in perfect freedom before God in the light of the living.

PSALM 57.

This and some other Psalms, which evidently relate to the Saulian persecutions, are generally spoken of, as if written in the various hiding places to which David was driven in his extremities. But this opinion does not carry with it the weight of probability. The dark cave is an unsuitable place for the poet's study, and the hour of fearfulness and trembling, unpropitious for entertaining the still small voice of inspiration. Yet as many of the sublime thoughts contained in these particular Psalms may have flashed upon the mind of their writer in seasons of darkness and terror; it is probable that they were there cherished as in embryo, until freedom and tranquillity gave them birth. These Psalms are therefore so

many evidences that David's grateful piety was not a mere transitory feeling; but that he frequently reflected upon his past perils and deliverances, and made them the subject of continual and habitual thankfulness: and as such they are valuable to us as lessons of godliness, in all our experience of the dispensations of Divine Providence.

Vers. 1—5. The pathetic style of this opening passage, indicates the presence of severe affliction, and may have been the extempore prayer of the fugitive David, even in the darkness of the sheltering cave; for there must the strength of his soul's trust in the Most High have been tried to the utmost. The sudden exclamation for mercy is the outbreak of a natural feeling, expressive of confidence in the divine protection, even had there followed no avowal of it in distinct words: but the Psalmist almost invariably attaches to his prayers the ground of his appeal, as in this instance:—Be merciful unto me, O God, for my soul trusteth in Thee. Prayer, without this confidence, is but lip-service, and a mockery of God, which is entitled to no hearing, and to which no promise belongs; whereas we have our Lord's assurance, that all things, whatsoever we shall ask in prayer believing, we shall receive. The fervency of David's supplication is the testimony of his belief: I will call unto the Most High God; even unto the God that *shall* perform the cause which I have in hand: for He is in heaven, ruling over all; while my foes, though they are many and mighty, and would devour my soul, even as the beasts of prey, whose savage nature is as a consuming fire, and their teeth as spears and arrows—these are but men, the creatures of his hand, the instruments of his will; from whose malicious designs I will hide me under the shadow of his wings, until their tyranny be overpast. In the portion which follows, we see at once strong reasons for supposing, that this Psalm was the production of a reflective hour of peace, when all the perils of the son of Jesse had passed away, and become mere subjects of grateful reminiscence to the enthroned king of Israel.

Ver. 6—12. Here is an act of devout adoration to which David seems to have been suddenly impelled by the contemplation of the signal escapes he had experienced, through the manifest interposition of the divine arm in his behalf: for with only a brief interruption, arising from a backward glance at his perils and his deliverance, the whole passage is an animated address to the Almighty, expressive of the most entire devotion, and uttered in terms of peculiar force:—My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. And he summons all the powers of his soul, and all his acquired skill in the science of harmony, to assist in the fulfilment of his pious resolve:—Awake up my glory—(the glory of man is the immortal spirit, the soul)—awake, lute and harp, I myself will awake right early to the delightful duty of giving thanks unto the God of my salvation; and not only in the privacies of home, but in the presence of my people; and not only before them, but unto all nations will I proclaim thy praise: for the greatness of thy mercy extends far beyond the limits of this earthly sphere; it reacheth unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. And, here, as if conscious that human powers are all unequal to the task of perfecting the praise of God for his merciful loving-kindness towards his creatures, the Psalmist humbly beseeches Him to manifest his own glory not only above all the earth, but above the heavens also; that we, with angels and arch-angels, and with all the company of heaven, may laud and magnify his Glorious Name: evermore praising Him, and saying, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory: glory be to Thee, O Lord Most High! As this Psalm is appointed to be used on Easter Day, it is evident that the Church considers our Lord's triumph over death and the powers of darkness to be the consummation of the Psalmist's prayer, and the full manifestation of God's glory in the sight of men and angels.

PSALM 58.

As the words of this Psalm are expressive of contemptuous indignation, it has been conjectured to have been pointed at Saul's time-serving counsellors, who had brought false accusations against David, through envy of his superior talents and virtues; thus stirring up the jealousy of the weak monarch towards his most faithful servant; and gradually urging him to employ open force for David's destruction. But his conscious innocence and his trust in God enabled him to foresee the failure of their designs, and their just recompense of reward.

Ver. 1—5. It behoves all men who are in authority, as were the counsellors and courtiers of Saul, to be patterns of righteousness, and administrators of impartial justice; but the favour of the great often proves too strong a temptation against judging the thing that is right. It often happens too, that they are beyond the reach of correction, and even of accusation. But what an imperishable record of the guilt of David's false slanderers do these homely questions establish: Far keener than the weightiest accusations is an appeal to the guilty heart upon its assumed integrity. And David wisely resorts to this mode of examination, well knowing that self-conviction would strike the offenders dumb, when he came to charge home upon them the details of their guilt. It would appear from the terms of David's questions, that Saul's court and household were composed of persons who claimed for themselves, (as many do who have no pretensions to it), a character for integrity of purpose, honesty in action, and a judgment not to be swayed by interest or prejudice: but the persecuted wanderer appeals to their doings, and asks them if these are consistent with their professions. He relies upon the power of conscience within them, and strengthens its accusations by reminding them of their actual guilt:—Ye imagine mischief, and your hands deal with wickedness. But this is the fruit of your hypocrisy: as the servants of God's anointed king, ye profess to be *his* servants also, and in his Name ye fight against the heathen foes

of Israel: the while ye are not less ungodly than they; for like them ye go away from the truth, speaking lies; your breath is as venomous as the poison of a serpent; your minds are not set upon righteousness; ye are strangers to all virtue, regardless of the instructions of wisdom, wilfully deaf as the adder that stoppeth her ears, which refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. It is not to be wondered at, that with this deep knowledge of the character of his slanderers, David, in his righteous indignation of their ungodliness, should indulge in the strong imprecations which follow: and be it remembered that all was fulfilled; he lived to see his desire upon his enemies.

Ver. 6—8. Bishop Horne remarks truly, that the destruction of the wicked is here represented under six distinct similitudes: the greater part, however, are too obvious to need explanation. In one only there is great obscurity, and this is acknowledged by the ablest expositors. The best comment I have met with is in the form of a free paraphrase of this difficult verse (the 8th.) Lastly, O ye sinners, who affright all ye meet with the keen arrows of your malicious will, piercing and wounding the innocent; would to God ye were as the tender thorns, while yet they are imperfectly formed, only beginning to expand, and partly bent and crushed by the violence of the blast, partly burnt up by untimely heat, so that they cannot hurt or annoy the wayfarer. So let the tempest of the divine indignation vex your souls, even as a thing that is raw.

Ver. 9. 10. However harsh the anticipation in the opening passage of these verses may appear, it is true to nature; and it is something more: for as the hands of the ungodly are greatly strengthened, and their power for a season is irresistible, by reason of their bold defiance of all rule and all authority above that of man; it is reasonable, it is pardonable, it is justifiable, to rejoice in their overthrow by the visible interposition of the divine arm: for hence arises the consolation of the righteous,

and the assurance that God is on their side. What follows is only a proverbial phrase, allusive to the necessary experience of the warrior, who retiring from a successful combat with a hostile force, and pursuing his way through their slaughtered carcasses, must soil his footsteps with their blood. The conclusion drawn by the Psalmist is at once reasonable and philosophic: for if the ungodly will so circumvent the path of the righteous; if they will persecute him to the very bounds of destruction, stopped short only by the unanswerable fiat, thus far shalt thou go, but no further: then is the divine interference so manifest, that the unbeliever himself shall be constrained to acknowledge an omnipotent protecting and avenging Providence: then shall all the unconcerned observers of the unequal conflict between the oppressors and their victim admit, however unwilling, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XXII.

PSALM 59.

This Psalm is supposed to have been written on the occasion of that great extremity of David's early life, when he was obliged to hide himself from the wrath of Saul, in his mad jealousy of the favour, which David's victories over the Philistines had purchased for him among Saul's subjects. From this danger he was delivered by the affectionate regard established mutually between himself and Jonathan the son of Saul. David here applies the strongest figurative terms to the inveterate malice of Saul and his blood-thirsty instruments: but exults in the confidence of his own final escape, and of the signal vengeance with which his enemies should be visited to their utter destruction: concluding in his customary strain of grateful thanksgiving.

Ver. 1—8. If, as conjectured, this Psalm was composed on the occasion alluded to, the history of David's perilous position at the time fully bears him out in the use of the strong language he applies to the character of his adversaries. The narrative is contained in the 19th and 20th chapters of the first book of Samuel; and the fidelity of his friend Jonathan stands out in beautiful contrast to the insane malice of Saul towards the unoffending young man, to whom, above all others, he was indebted for the preservation of his throne and kingdom; on whom he had bestowed his own daughter in marriage; and to whose skill upon the harp, he owed many hours of calmness and peace, when labouring under the malady which was doubtless exasperated, if not caused, by the violence of his own evil passions. When therefore Saul sought David to slay him only through envy, and with all the helps which a powerful monarch could command, can we wonder at the fervency of David's appeal to the only arm that could deliver him from his complicated danger; though it was to be effected by the instrumen-

tality of the king's own son, the affianced friend of the inoffensive fugitive? Neither is the language of the Psalmist unjustifiably severe, when he speaks of Saul and his helpers as enemies, without any offence or fault on his own part; as wicked doers, blood-thirsty men that lie waiting for his soul; hunting him throughout the city with the savage keenness of dogs in the pursuit of vermin; as heathen men whose threatening words are very swords, for, as they say, who doth hear? Such is the feeling of those, who indulging in malicious aims, answer the reproaches of conscience with the fool's subterfuge—they say in their heart, There is no God! But Thou, Lord, shalt have them in derision: and Thou shalt laugh all the heathen to scorn. This verse is introductory to the Psalmist's warm expression of personal confidence and praise.

Ver. 9—10. We are reminded, my brethren, that all Scripture is written for our learning; and there is no sacred book of the Old Testament so rich in lessons of practical piety as these effusions of the spirit of the sweet Psalmist of Israel. In these two brief verses, for instance, we see, as if inscribed on a hand-post to guide us on our Christian pilgrimage, the way in which we should walk on the rough and thorny road of life, when beset by temptations from without, or sorrows or fears within: or when suffering from the enmity of others; if we can say, like David, that it is without any offence or fault of me, O Lord! For here is pointed out that fountain of strength, the waters of which are alone blessed with the medicinal power to heal all our infirmities; the FAITH, which as it cometh of God, is the only passport by which we can hopefully approach towards God; confessing it to be of his mercy alone that we have not been consumed; that it is by his imparted strength we retain every other blessing He has bestowed upon us; that we have all experienced largely of his plenteous goodness; and that our sole reliance for support, and defence, and strength, through the remainder of our allotted pilgrimage, is upon the God of

our salvation, who alone can grant us to see our desire upon our enemies, both temporal and spiritual.

Ver. 11—15. In these verses here is *apparently* a contradiction of terms in the construction of David's prayer against his enemies, but not so in reality. He says in one place, Slay them not, lest my people forget it; but scatter them abroad. In the other passage it is, Consume them in thy wrath; consume them, that they may perish, and know that it is God that ruleth in Jacob. For both parts of the prayer were literally fulfilled: the sons of Saul, including even the beloved Jonathan, were soon after slain in battle, fighting valiantly for their father's kingdom. Saul himself, being in imminent danger, surrounded by his enemies the Philistines, fell upon his own sword and died. Thus were the persecutors of David consumed in the divine wrath; while the Philistine enemies of Israel were for a season triumphant, and reserved only for a future more certain fate; and in the meantime to be scattered abroad among the people, as witnesses to all the inhabitants of the earth, that God ruleth in Jacob, and to the ends of the world. Moreover the followers of Saul, the Israelites themselves, were at that time the enemies of David, and these were also scattered abroad by the superior power of the Philistines; but were not slain, that as David prays, his own faithful people should not too speedily forget the punishment of the rebellious and blood-thirsty instruments of Saul's undeserved malice. And these are they of whom the Psalmist predicts, that as their language against him hath been hitherto of cursing and lies, so in the evening—that is, when the time comes that they may safely do it—in the evening they will return, grin like a dog, and go about the city: running here and there for revenge—the meat upon which their souls delighted to fatten—and grudge if they be not satisfied.

Ver. 16, 17. If anything can awaken a dull spirit to the sense of an all-ruling and watchful Providence, surely the escape from perils which no human power could avert, must

operate to recal the mind which has not God in all its thoughts to a consciousness and acknowledgment that it is of the Lord's mercy alone that the endangered person has not been consumed. Yet we read and hear continually of casualties of the most threatening aspect, from which the deliverance has been almost, if not altogether miraculous. How little, however, do we witness of the spirit of praise and thanksgiving to the great Deliverer! Such was not the ignorance or insensibility of David, even in his youthful years: for such were those in which he had to bear and to escape the malice of an insane and envious king. Yet upon the memorable occasion of his being hunted even by a host of armed enemies, while he lay hidden in a cave, and though his constant friend Jonathan was the only visible agent of his deliverance; he does not neglect to ascribe that deliverance to the power and mercy of the God of his salvation. As for me, I will sing of thy power and praise thy mercy: Thou hast been my defence and refuge: Thou art my strength, my refuge, and my merciful God. Unto Thee will I sing: Thee will I praise betimes in the morning. Here is an example to all who profess and call themselves Christians, not only worthy of their imitation, but demanding it. For where there is no sense of the providential care of the Almighty over our temporal safety, there is but feeble ground of hope, that that heart is penetrated either by faith or fear, under the more mysterious dispensations of divine grace. Yet must we accustom ourselves to the reflection, that our life and all its blessings are in the hands of God, before we can aspire to the more exalted trust in his mercy through Christ Jesus, for the salvation of our souls in eternity.

P S A L M 60.

The young monarch of Israel was now peaceably seated on his throne, with all the tribes living in loyal obedience to his Heaven-derived authority. But there were hosts of heathen foes around him, whom it was his duty to God, to himself, and his people, to bring under subjection. Under these circumstances therefore, David

commences this Psalm with a retrospective view of the condition of the Israelites in past times, and an acknowledgment that it was the Lord alone who had given them peace within their own borders, and settled himself in lawful authority over them. He particularly rejoices in the union of the other tribes with that of Judah; and prophesies of the subjection of other countries to his own power.

Ver. 1—5. David's experience of continual warfare, from the day of his being called from the sheep-folds, and voluntarily offering himself to encounter the giant of Gath, had doubtless filled his mind with awful reflections on those long ages which had been marked by the multiplied rebellions of the seed of Abraham against the authority of the divine Lawgiver. He opens this Psalm with a view of the sufferings entailed upon the past and existing generations by their obstinate ingratitude: acknowledging nevertheless, that God had still preserved a token in favour of such as feared Him; that they might triumph because of the truth which they had cherished in their own hearts. Therefore, he says, were thy beloved delivered. And with the prospect before him of continued warfare with the foes of Israel, he prays in his own person, that the Lord Jehovah will help him with his right hand, and hear him. Immediately upon this, the Psalmist breaks forth in the expression of an exultant assurance that his prayer is answered.

Ver. 6—8. This is a fine burst of confidence—God hath spoken in his holiness! I can now go forth in the strength of the promise of the God of Israel. I will parcel out the lands of the heathen for the inheritance of my people: Gilead, Manasseh, and Ephraim have already joined themselves unto Judah, and Israel shall henceforth be one people: I will degrade their enemies to the lowest purposes of life: Edom shall be my wash-pot, I will set my foot upon Moab as upon a reptile, over Philistia will I triumph as over a foe often subdued. For God hath spoken in his holiness, that is, by his Holy Spirit, through the mouth of his servant, as related by the prophet Samuel—the Lord hath spoken of David, saying, by the

hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies.

Ver. 9—12. The strong city of which the Psalmist here speaks was Bozrah, the capital of the Edomites, situated as the prophet Obadiah informs us, in the clefts of the rocks; and of whose inhabitants he says, the pride of their heart had deceived them: for said they, Who shall bring us down to the ground? And Isaiah, in a fine vision of the future, prophesies of the Saviour as the destroyer of idolatry, which is typified in the kingdom of Edom—Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save! I have trodden the wine-press alone. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury; and I will bring down their strength to the earth. And again, the prophet Jeremiah—I have sworn by Myself, saith the Lord, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all the cities thereof (Edom) shall be perpetual wastes. The Psalmist therefore asks triumphantly, Who will lead me into the strong city? and replies to himself in the spirit of prophecy, Wilt not Thou, O God, who in time past hadst cast us out, even thine own people; wilt not Thou, O God, go forth with our hosts? For as the help of man is vain, O be Thou our help in trouble! Then shall the heathen rage against Thy people Israel in vain, and her proud foes shall imagine vanity: it is Thou, O God, who alone shalt tread down our enemies!

PSALM 61.

Whatever mystical application of this Psalm may have been made to the church and kingdom of the Messiah, when in trouble or in triumph; its plain and obvious character is that of prayer, and confidence, and praise, under a strong sense of

past deliverances, and of dependence upon God alone for future protection and prosperity. And the terms of which the Psalm is composed, flow together in so continuous a strain, that it cannot well be broken into separate parts.*

Ver. 1—8. Although this beautiful composition gradually swells into the higher strains of grateful praise, it opens with the expression of that humility of spirit, which best becomes the Christian, even when in the fullest exercise of faith, he is looking onward, through the untold years of his earthly pilgrimage, with an undisturbed reliance upon the support and protection of his Saviour God. For prayer is the language of faith—that which alone can be interpreted by the recording angel in such wise, as to ensure the admission of our names into the book of life. It is to the prevalence of the spirit of prayer, throughout these sacred effusions of a pious mind, that the Book of Psalms owes its chief value, as a manual of Christian devotion; as a guide to the humble and unlearned disciple; and as a stimulant to the dull cold heart, that is oppressed by any or all of the ills that flesh is heir to: whether it is trouble, or need, or sorrow, or sickness, or other adversity. Hear my crying, O God! give ear unto my prayer! For when my heart is in heaviness, I will call upon Thee. I am too conscious of my own weakness, my own undeserving, to depend on myself alone, or to put my trust in the strength of mortal flesh; for vain is the help of man. O set me up upon the Rock that is higher than I; for in all my experience of dangers past, Thou hast been my hope; to thy protecting arm I owe all my deliverances: Thou hast been unto me a strong tower against my enemies. In the hour of peril, and in the hour of peace, Thou, O Lord, hast heard and granted my desires. And to the people of my love, thine own faithful Israel, Thou hast given an heritage: even to as many as fear Thy Name. As for me, thy mercy and loving-kindness have been so abundantly vouchsafed,

* Merrick's exquisite version of this Psalm justifies this obvious interpretation of its characteristics.

that fain,—to make the sacrifices of a humble and grateful heart acceptable in Thy sight,—fain would I dwell in thy Tabernacle for ever. I look onward with a joyful heart, through the remaining travail of my earthly lot, only to the all-sheltering cover of thy wings ; there will I repose my trust ; for Thou shalt preserve my life through many years ; and Thou wilt not suffer the name of thine anointed king to perish through endless generations. Fain would he dwell in thy presence for ever ; trusting in thy loving-mercy and faithfulness to preserve whom Thou hast chosen to rule over thy people Israel, that thy Name may be glorified in all the earth, and by thy redeemed flock, through the countless ages of eternity.

So shall thy love awake my song,
Thy Name the willing note prolong ;
While warm'd with zeal my vows I pay,
And bless Thee to my latest day. MERRICK.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XXIII.

PSALM 62.

From the abrupt opening of this Psalm, it is conjectured to have been dictated in a moment of deep meditation; wherein David had been contrasting his own experience of God's manifold favours towards himself, with the impotency of his enemies in all their devices against his peace and prosperity. It is nevertheless said in the oldest Bibles to have been given or addressed to the excellent musician Jeduthun. And it is well adapted, as a hymn for public use, to inspire the faithful adherents of David with that confidence in their God, which he expresses with so much warmth of feeling and energy of speech.

Ver. 1, 2. In the Hebrew version of this Psalm, six of the verses begin with the word which we interpret by our word, *truly*; and this gives to the entire composition its meditative character. It wears the appearance throughout of having been the result of deep reflection indulged in the silence of seclusion. As if looking around him upon still existing dangers, he had called to mind his deliverances in old time; and thence refreshed his spirit with the assurance, that as he still placed his sole dependence on the power and faithfulness of God, he might look forward to Him for final salvation. So that whatever trials and reverses he may yet be destined to sustain, the imparted strength of Jehovah would not permit his faithful servant greatly to fall.

Ver. 3, 4. Here the Psalmist gives vent to his just indignation at the folly and malignity of those whose device is only to put him out, whom God will exalt. And this sentence is so closely applicable to the occasion, as to justify the opinion that it was penned during Absalom's rebellion: for such was his vile intention towards his too indulgent father. But David foresaw the fate of the rebels, though he mourned piteously

over that of his ungrateful son. Having a perfect knowledge that the object of his foes was to dispossess him of his throne and his life, he treats them with perfect contempt, as conscious that he holds his authority from Him who alone could bestow it, and guard it through His own appointed time:—How long will ye imagine mischief against *me*, to whom the Lord Jehovah hath given the sovereignty over his people Israel? They trusted in deceit and lies, and therefore is their boasted strength no better than that of a tottering wall or of a broken hedge. It was thus that the prophet Isaiah rebuked the stubborn and rebellious generation of his day:—This iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, the swelling out of a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant. The Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him:—and this was the faith of the pious king of Israel, in former times of rebuke and blasphemy.

Ver. 5—7. The time of affliction is the time for the exercise and strengthening of our faith. David had foretold, in the preceding verses, the overthrow of his rebel subjects, and had indulged himself in a contemptuous vision of their final destruction; but he reflected that it was not his own sword that should help him, nor his own arm that should insure his victory over them. He subdues his thoughts, therefore, to the discipline of meditative prayer, recalling his soul to the exercise of its faith and patience, in waiting still upon God; upon whom, he confesses, relies his only hope; from whom he derives his true strength; to whom alone he looks for salvation, that is, safe deliverance from the power of his foes; and who will defend him against every assault, under which in his own unassisted strength he was likely to fall. And, renouncing all self-confidence, he proclaims his sole dependence on the power and faithfulness of God:—In Him is my health and my glory, He is the rock of my might, and in Him is my trust. I have said in the introduction, that this Psalm is

adapted to inspire the faith of others. And though few among the children of men have, or have had to sustain, the severe trials which fell to the lot of David from his youth upward; yet

Each has his sufferings: all are men,
Condemn'd alike to groan.

And herein is pointed out the source of that relief, of which all stand in need, more or less, from time to time. The great Physician of souls hath prescribed the remedy for every temporal evil, and the Comforter is ever present to administer it at our earnest call. To the groans of penitence, the prayer of faith, and the aspirations of humble and holy confidence, his ears are ever attent. Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, is the Saviour's invitation; and the Holy Spirit is his Messenger of Mercy, in answer to our prayers, whom He hath promised to us, and to abide with us for ever. In God, therefore, is our health and our glory, the rock of our strength; if in Him we have learned to put our trust.

Ver. 8—12. These remaining verses are evidently an exhortation to the people to follow after righteousness, to hold communion with their God, to put their trust in him alway, by reason of the vanity of their own nature; that is, their feebleness, their moral infirmities; by which they are prone to be deceived and to deceive themselves: so that when tried in the balance of the Sanctuary they are deceitful upon the weights, and altogether lighter than vanity itself. Wherefore the Psalmist implores them not to violate the divine laws, under whatever temptation, with the hope of deriving any real benefit from unhallowed pursuits:—Trust not in robbery and wrong; give not yourselves to the blind folly of expecting good to arise from that which is itself evil; riches so gathered are a torment to their possessors; and even when obtained by honest and virtuous pursuits, let not the love of them ensnare your hearts;

for not only do they make wings to themselves and fly away; but even while we possess them they are the ministers of good or evil, as ordained by Him who ruleth all things both in heaven and in earth: if the lot of wealth be fallen into the lap, the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord. Of this the Psalmist acknowledges his own strong conviction: for that, though the Lord is just and merciful, rewarding every man according to his work, all power belongeth unto Him. And it is also the doctrine of the New Testament, that as He giveth unto all, life and breath and all things, and giveth us richly all things to enjoy in this life; so hereafter will He, who is the Searcher of the reins and of the heart, give unto every one according to his works.

PSALM 63.

Although this earnest effusion of piety was written when David had been warned by the prophet Gad to escape from one hiding place to another, for fear of Saul; yet in the concluding verse he speaks of himself as the king, who shall rejoice in God during the peaceful seasons of his future reign. The Psalm is throughout an eloquent record of ardent devotion and immovable faith: and excepting the last three verses, may be profitably used to assist the private meditations of the Christian.

Ver. 1—9. These verses constitute a perfect sacred ode or hymn, and in the original language were finely adapted to music. For it has been suggested by an ancient author,* that though the Psalm was written in the extremity of distress and fear, David had preserved it for his coming days of prosperity; under the impulses of a strong faith, that such days were in store for him, when the pious effusions of his own heart might be made instrumental to the religious instruction of his people. For, as the same author remarks, the value of this Psalm for the perpetual use of the Church lies in its adaptation to both

* Amyraldus.

prayer and thanksgiving: since such is the condition of the faithful in this life, that these corresponding motions of the spirit must always accompany each other. And it may be further remarked that every act of adoration is a combination of both in one. Such is the opening verse of this Psalm. It is a spontaneous outburst of the awakened soul, that seems to have been kindled by the first ray of the morning's dawn—that sacred moment, when, having slept in danger, the consciousness of his preservation shot like an electric spark throughout the entire being of the persecuted fugitive; summoning all the faculties of his soul to the duties of grateful praise and devoted worship:—O God, Thou art my God: early will I seek Thee. My soul, aroused from its slumbers, is athirst for the renewed manifestations of thy Presence, of which Thou givest me the first token in the returning light of day. In the weakness of my exhausted nature my flesh also longeth for thy providential sustenance; condemned as it is to wander in a barren and a dry land where no water is. Thus do I look to see Thee in thy holiness; (or, as the more comprehensive translation of the Bible gives it,) to see thy power and thy glory, as I have seen Thee in the Sanctuary. Thus with my lips do I now praise Thee, in the assurance of thy renewed loving-kindness, which is better than the consciousness of life, dear as this is to all thy creatures; and without which, life itself is a sere and parched wilderness. And in this manner will I magnify Thee as long as I live, raising my hands to Thee in thanksgiving, bowing my knees before Thee in adoration and prayer. In these oblations, while thus I am preserved and encouraged to praise Thee with joyful lips, my soul shall be satisfied, even as it were with marrow and fatness. Its desires are confined to the continued manifestations of thy loving-kindness, whether my life be prolonged under the dread of them that seek the hurt of my soul; or under thy more welcome dispensations of deliverance, and triumph, and prosperity. Thou knowest, O Lord, that I

have remembered Thee in my bed, when the shadows of night were made more terrific by the fear of besetting foes. Have I not in my earliest thoughts, awakened by the returning dawn, to Thee poured out my spirit with unabated confidence? Have I not? And why? because hitherto Thou and Thou alone hast been my helper. Thou hast sustained me in every temptation and every trial of the flesh and of the spirit, with which in thine unsearchable wisdom Thou hast strewed my path: and therefore it is, that I can and will rejoice under the shadow of thy wings. For the entire dependence of my soul is upon Thee, since Thou hast conducted me onward through the perils of time; since thy right hand hath upholden me against every temporal adversary; Thou wilt also make me triumph over my spiritual foes, and wilt finally deliver my soul from the tyranny of sin and death. Under all this preponderance of faith and devoutness of spirit, it was nevertheless impossible the hunted exile should forget, that in his exaltation must be involved the overthrow and destruction of his enemies. In the following verses he contemplates this necessity with a prophetic spirit, as well as his own reasons for rejoicing in his assumed triumph.

Ver. 10—12. The second, as well as the first and third verses, must be read as a prophecy, and not as an imprecation—his enemies shall fall upon the sword, that they may be a portion for foxes; that is, that their carcasses may become a prey to all the wild beasts of the earth. In the last verse David looks forward with commendable pride to the honour of the sovereignty that awaits him, as being about to receive it from the immediate hand of God, which will be the great reason of his rejoicing in it; and he foreshews at the same time, that all who swear by the Lord, that is, who acknowledge Him, and take the oaths of allegiance in the Lord's Name, shall be commended. This is illustrated by a passage in the prophecy of Isaiah:—He who blesseth himself in the earth, shall bless him-

self in the God of Truth ; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of Truth.

PSALM 64.

Some of the more learned among the Jews, whilst they all admit David to be the author of this Psalm, will apply it as prophetic of the experience of the upright Daniel, when he had excited the envy of Nebuchadnezzar's counsellors. The Psalmist's prophetic spirit might have foreseen this period of persecution in the life of a fellow-servant of the Lord : but there is quite enough of similar treatment exhibited in the eventful life of the son of Jesse, to justify us in applying it exclusively to his own experience : since the entire character of the Psalm is in perfect harmony with many others, which we apply personally to the sacred writer himself.

Ver. 1—6. This Psalm admits of but a brief commentary, since it is like many others in construction, commencing with prayer, and progressing in the form of reflection upon surrounding characters and events ; but closing with expressions of that confidence in God, which his experience of the Divine goodness had impressed on his soul. It is not less necessary to our peace, that we should be preserved and strengthened against the *fear* of an enemy, than against the injury he would inflict upon us. We may not, however, hope to avert the danger, or to dispel the fear of a slanderous foe, by giving railing for railing ; but if we would pass our lives in the possession of inward peace,

O'er evil tongues and evil days triumphant,

we must look to attain this state of temporal blessedness, only by so living, that we may constantly and confidently lay open our hearts to God ; trusting in Him to hear the voice of our prayer, and to hide us from the gathering together of the froward. This, we have seen in many instances throughout the Psalms, was the practice of the wise king of Israel. He trusted not in his own power to avenge himself of his more active enemies ; nor even in his own consciousness of integrity, to

gainsay his slanderers. He committed his defence to the God of Truth and Justice; not however refraining to lay before the judgment-seat of the Almighty the character of his vilifiers; their mutual encouragement of each other in their meditated mischief; or their foolish imagination that they can conceal their wickedness, by keeping their designs secret among themselves, every man in the depth of his own heart. Although all this was unnecessary, when appealing to Him from whom no secrets are hid; yet was it right to preserve a written record of these things, for the general instruction of mankind, for the caution of the innocent and unsuspecting, and for the terror of the slanderous and malignant. The inspired penman has given a higher finish to the portrait of the backbiters than they deserve; but it was only by the use of language redolent of poetry, and by giving to his colours the glow of elegance, that he could impart to his picture the impressive characters of truth: The froward and wicked doers have whet their tongue like a sword: and shoot out their arrows, even bitter words; that they may privily shoot at him that is perfect.

Ver. 7—10 Here the Psalmist contemplates the recompense that awaits the wicked doers, against whose machinations he has already cast his own prayers into the balance of the Sanctuary. He not only foretels the interference of the Almighty arm in his own behalf, but he also foresees that their falsehood shall be so obvious in the sight of men, as to bring down upon their heads the present punishment of universal scorn and contempt. This alone is no slight infliction upon godless men, who look no further than to the things of time and sense, in their estimate of what they call good or evil. And the time of prosperity, or success in their wicked devices, is not with them a time of fearful looking-for of future judgment. Yet was David humbly confident that such judgment awaited them, and a just immediate punishment from the hand of God: and that so plainly manifest to the sight of all men, that they

should be constrained to acknowledge it to be the Lord's doing: they shall perceive that it is his work—This hath God done: He hath suddenly shot at them with a swift arrow, and they fall, wounded. The immediate beneficial effect of their exemplary punishment, the Psalmist foresees will be the strengthening and refreshing of the righteous in their religious faith. Even they who are merely true of heart, that is, honest in their purposes, and sound in their principles, but having no prominent marks of piety towards God—for such characters do exist—even they shall be glad. But the righteous shall rejoice in the Lord, and put their trust in Him. They shall ascribe to none other than Divine Power and Goodness, the deliverance of the just man from the malicious designs of his enemies; they shall be confirmed in their dependence on the God of Israel, in their own experience of suffering or of danger: for, looking upon that of the persecuted David, and the marvellous interposition of the divine arm in his protection and deliverance, they shall acknowledge, This is the Lord's doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes!

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XXIV.

PSALM 65.

The latest of our Commentators on the Psalms* calls this a "very lovely song of Sion;" and whether we regard the poetic character of its language, its warmth of devotion, the variety of its object, or the easy and quick transition from one theme of adoration to another; we are constrained to admit the justice of his praise. Almost every single verse of this Psalm demands a distinct notice and an appropriate study. Praise, prayer, prophecy, and the acknowledgment of temporal and spiritual blessings, constitute it altogether one of the richest even of the Psalmist's effusions, that can be presented to our understanding, or to our affections.

Ver. 1, 2. In these few words is comprised the history of the Jewish worship—the then present and future. It was on Mount Sion, in the days of their comparative ignorance, when the Jews worshipped they knew not what, (as our Saviour told the woman of Samaria,) that they offered their legal sacrifices. But after alluding to this custom, the Psalmist foretels the time when the vows made unto Jehovah shall be performed in Jerusalem: where and when unto Him that heareth prayer all flesh shall come. It is equally true of the Jewish and of the Christian worship, that each necessarily passed through a transition from imperfection to the more perfect state. The former attained to its highest grandeur only after the building of the Temple. The latter, namely, our own Christian Order of worship, was instantly, as it were, felt to be incomplete, until Churches had been raised to the honour of God, in compliance with the original custom which had been commanded by Jehovah Himself, as may be seen in the second book of Chronicles; where the consecration of the Temple by king Solomon is recorded, and wherein is preserved that sublime prayer which he offered upon the occasion; and which concludes with this

* Bp. Horne.

emphatic expression of his faith; that this building was none other than the house of God, this was the gate of heaven:— Now, my God, let, I beseech Thee, thine eyes be open; and let thine ears be attent unto the prayer that is made in this place!

Ver. 3. Here the Psalmist confesses his hope, that He who heareth prayer will not turn a deaf ear to his own supplications, though in the judgment of his own conscience his misdeeds prevail against him. But the faithful priest of the Sanctuary is seldom seen praying for himself alone—O be Thou merciful unto *our* sins!

Ver. 4. Few there are, it is to be feared, who know the blessedness of giving their whole heart in the house of God, to worship Him in spirit and in truth! Do not, my brethren, think this a hard sentence, as falling from my lips. Our Lord's own words are, Many are called, but few are chosen. But for encouragement, the Psalmist tells us, Blessed is the man whom God chooseth, and receiveth unto Himself. It is not that we are called upon to sacrifice our whole time in the immediate service of God; but that at all seasons, even in our daily occupations, the heart shall be its own sanctuary; that this shall be consecrated to God; that here we may ever resort, with a holy confidence in the divine mercy; and that here we shall be satisfied in the same degree as with the pleasures of the Holy Temple on the sacred Sabbath of rest.

Ver. 5—8. All the divine promises are yea and amen—once made, for ever sure. All the Old Testament writings abound with promises of another and better dispensation than that which was given to Moses: and we have seen the wonderful things wrought in our behalf by the righteousness of God. The promise of the great Conqueror, who should bruise the head of that serpent who had inoculated all the race of Adam with the disease of sin, has been wonderfully fulfilled. The great Physician of our souls has wrought, laboured, suffered, and died, for the cure of that mortal disease which brought death into the

world, and all our woe. By his resurrection and re-ascension to the glory which He had left, solely to accomplish this great work, He has confirmed not only the promises of God, but their fulfilment; and the assurance of their efficacy for the ends whereunto they were wrought—even the redemption and final salvation of the whole human race. For in one of the many prophecies to the same effect, it is proclaimed that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea; and *that* penetrating faith which possessed the soul of the Psalmist sees its accomplishment before-hand, in the coming of the promised Messiah. Thou that art the Hope of all the ends of the earth! Yet again, as in other places, he refers to the visible evidences of Almighty Power to stimulate our faith in the wonderful things to be effected by the righteousness of God; foretelling that while all who dwell on the earth, even in its uttermost parts, shall be afraid of the tokens of his power, He shall nevertheless, by His equally visible goodness, make the outgoings of the morning and evening to praise Him: that is, the blessed changes of morning and evening shall witness the outpourings of gratitude from the hearts of His people, for the great things He hath done for our souls.

Ver. 9—14. I have already, and may again have occasion, to call your attention, my brethren, to the pure poetry which occasionally adorns the Book of Psalms. Now here is a succession of beautiful imaginings, strung together in the simplest language, yet strikingly forcible and truthful. The general notion of poetry is, that it must necessarily be metrical, that is, written in measured lines, and these ending in words of corresponding sound. Yet, while I admit, (what we all know from our infancy,) that language thus arranged takes a more easy possession of the memory, and is more quickly comprehended by young minds; it is equally true, that genuine poetry does not depend upon this exercise of an art, which is vouchsafed to only a very small portion of mankind. True poetry is sentiment, clothed

in such language as instantly insures it a passport through the understanding to the heart, where it is certain of being met by the warmest welcome. Where it is not so, either the heart is callous to those things which are especially ordained for its solace and delight; or the understanding is barren for the want of early culture, I would not hold up this latter condition as a crime, or even a fault. It is a condition which demands our pity, not our blame. Nor would I have spoken on the subject at all, but for the purpose of shewing you, that the latter verses from the Psalm we are now considering, though full of the most exquisite poetry, are nevertheless so simple in their terms, the beauty of their truth so obvious to the plainest understanding, that they may become the means of awakening many a dull soul to the observance of those universal blessings of Divine Providence, which are lost to us for want of thought and reflection. The passages I am speaking of are altogether neither more nor less than a beautiful hymn of heart-worship; and if learned among our earliest lessons, if committed to memory in the very dawn of our mind's faculties, they might become a source of very frequent and very high enjoyment; by directing our attention to the beautiful works of God's handmaid, Nature; and thus gradually and habitually leading us to look through Nature up to Nature's God: that great and gracious Being who should be at all times

The theme of our discourse, the subject of our verse.

It would lengthen my present Lecture far beyond its proportionate bounds, were I to dwell upon every glowing and sparkling word that throws its single and combined light upon the entire composition. But they are altogether so simple in their quality, so easy of examination and of comprehension, that even the parent who cannot read may learn them from the lips of a child who can read; and thus imbibe into his heart a subject for hourly contemplation and thanksgiving, throughout his

daily occupations ; thus realizing in his own bosom that bold idea of the Psalmist, that the outgoings of his mornings and evenings are fraught with overflowing delight, and in the spirit of thanksgiving are made to praise the God of his salvation.

PSALM 66.

In this Psalm the royal priest does not confine his exhortation to his own people Israel ; but earnestly calls upon the whole world to shew forth that joyfulness which will be the most acceptable offering to the God of the spirits of all flesh ; for this is the manifestation at once of gratitude for the past experience of his goodness, and of trust in his continued loving-kindness towards us. He enumerates the deliverances of God's people, and the duties which they therefore owe to their Creator and Preserver. He declares his own experience of what the Lord had done for his soul, and expresses his own thankfulness that from time to time his prayers had been accepted.

Ver. 1—3. It is a disposition common to our nature, for men to unite together for the joyful celebration of any earthly occurrence, in which they feel a common interest. We cannot satisfy ourselves with singly and silently musing over a triumph gained, an honour bestowed, or a benefit to be obtained by our joint exertions ; but the very first impulse that we all feel is towards a community of action ; a gathering together, for the laudable purpose of mutually increasing our common feelings of satisfaction. How often this feeling prompts us individually to approach the house of God, with the desire of strengthening each other's hands, or sharing in each other's joys, by swelling the harmony of social worship, is a question which each must answer to himself. But this is the very object of our religious ordinances. All sound piety would speedily vanish from the hearts of all, if each were left to keep alive in himself the embers of his own religious feelings. We animate and encourage each other by communion. It is therefore that the Psalmist calls upon all lands to be joyful in their God, to sing praises in honour of his Name, to make his praise to be glorious. He exhorts us to acknowledge God's wonderful works

and the greatness of his power, to worship Him, to sing of Him, and praise his Name. We may and we ought to lift up our hearts to him in private devotion, and in the expression of our gratitude for the personal mercies and blessings we experience: but this, alone, is an offering unworthy of the Creator of Heaven and Earth. His rule is universal, his Providence extends over all, his grace is offered to all. His just demand is therefore our universal and united homage.

Ver. 4—8. The wonders of the world in which we now live, and move, and have our being, are alone sufficiently great and obvious to our senses, to insure our perpetual adoration of their and our Creator: if we were not habitually blind to their magnitude, and beauty, and usefulness: if we were not stubbornly deaf to their appeal, while they so loudly proclaim the glory of their Author. But the Psalmist, to strengthen his claim to our attention, turns from these to the greater wonders of Divine Grace, wherein all nations, all the children of men, have a deeper and more durable interest. He calls upon us to praise God, and to make the voice of his praise to be heard:—for why? God holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to slip.

Ver 9—11. In these verses we are reminded for our own instruction in righteousness, how the Israelites of old were tried in the furnace of affliction, for the correction of their sins; but that notwithstanding continued provocations, the Lord remembered his promise to establish his people in a land flowing with milk and honey; to drive out before them nations greater and mightier than themselves; to protect and deliver them for his great Name's sake; and finally to bring them out of their troubles, and settle them in a wealthy place. And the pious David, meditating on these wonders of old, turns his thoughts inward, and makes the suitable resolve.

Ver. 12—14. It is equally natural and becoming, when we are in trouble or in sickness, to look inward upon ourselves, to shrink under fears and apprehensions of some greater impend-

ing evil, conscious of our own deservings. And if the heart be not hardened into impenitence, we shall offer unto God the sacrifice of prayer, if not in the house of prayer, yet from our hearts, which we are taught to regard as temples of the Living God. Moreover, when our prayers shall be answered, our best return for the mercies vouchsafed to us, will be to acknowledge and proclaim them in the ears of our fellow sinners—O come hither and hearken, all ye that fear God; and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul.

Ver. 15—18. Here we are again reminded of the only medium of man's access to the throne of grace—the prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips. For David confesses that though he should call upon God with his mouth, and give Him praises with his tongue; yet, that if he cherished wickedness in his heart, the Lord would not hear him. Nevertheless he was assured that the sincerity of his devotion had proved acceptable at the mercy-seat; for this is the language of his rejoicing:—Praised be God, who hath not cast out my prayer, nor turned his mercy from me!

PSALM 67

All who have had the Form of the Solemnization of Matrimony celebrated on their behalf, according to the ordinances of our National Church, will remember that this Psalm is a portion of it. And a most appropriate hymn it is, of prayer, of thanksgiving, and of religious confidence, under whatever circumstances we may be placed; but more especially in those seasons of rejoicing, which are permitted to us in common, however brief they may be in their duration, that do nevertheless brighten and enliven some portion of the life of every human being. We must now, however, consider it as the effusion of a pious heart, preserved for our common edification, under all the changes and chances of this mortal life, a hymn of prayer, thanksgiving, and faith.

Ver. 1—3. It is by the blessing of God upon our several designs and actions, that they terminate to our advantage. In every undertaking upon which we enter, if the light of the divine countenance and approval do not accompany our work, our labour is in vain, as to any good to be expected finally from

it: for in all labour there is profit, only as it tends to our eternal benefit. But forasmuch as our natural propensities mislead us, and the powerful influences of the world around misguide us, we have need in our best services to pray that God will be merciful unto us. And it is in our experience of his mercy that his way, that is, his dealing with the children of his love, becomes known upon earth, his saving health among all nations. Well, therefore, does the Psalmist exhort all the people to praise God.

Ver 4, 5. Here are further motives to praise and thanksgiving pointed out. The former verses may be understood as an exhortation to individual thankfulness—these proclaim the title which the Almighty God possesses to our national gratitude for the blessings of his paternal government of the whole world; his righteous judgments, his restraining and directing power, exercised for the universal good. The Psalmist therefore repeats his call—Let the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee.

Ver. 6, 7. In this conclusion of the sacred hymn he anticipates the blessing which shall flow from the universal worship of God, if offered by his creatures in sincerity and truth; even the abundance of every temporal good, bestowed on us to confirm our faith in the divine promises which bear upon our future condition through eternity—that unchanging lot of happiness which has been so dearly purchased for us by the humiliation, the sufferings, and the death of God's own beloved Son. And herein are subjects for our grateful meditation, under whatever may be our personal or our national experience, under all the dispensations of God's Providence; knowing that as here we have no abiding city, so there is prepared for us hereafter, upon the condition of our faith and obedience, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us, through the mercies of God in his Son Christ Jesus our Lord. *Amen.*

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XXV.

PSALM 68.

This Psalm is considered by commentators as one of the most sublime, and at the same time one of the most difficult, on account of the rapid and numerous changes in its subjects. There is in it no continuous method, and the writer seems to have been carried beyond himself by the power of the prophetic spirit within him. The Psalm contains allusions to things past, and predictions of future events. Some which properly belong to the people of Israel, some to the Christian Church, some to the Person of Messiah. The style of the Psalm is also as variable as its subjects. It abounds in poetic descriptions, bold metaphors, and terms difficult of interpretation; and bearing altogether a dramatic construction. It is one of the Psalms appointed for the use of the Church on Whitsunday; and the whole is mystically allusive to the triumph and exaltation of Messiah, and to the illumination and strengthening of the Church by the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost.

Ver. 1—6. In the opening of this mysterious Psalm, David adopts the very words of Moses on removing the ark into its place, recorded in the Book of Numbers, (c. x;) and apparently, from meditating on this exalted act of adoration, he falls into a natural train of reflections upon the power and goodness of God; upon the claims He has upon the love and reverence of his creatures; and the joyfulness which should fill their hearts from the conviction, that this God is their God for ever and ever. He calls therefore upon the just to be thankful, and to celebrate his glorious Name, Jehovah, in songs of praise: foreshadowing the triumphant ascension of Christ, in the sublime figure of a conqueror traversing the celestial spheres in the majesty of his glory, and using the visible heavens as his chariot: albeit He ever condescends to the low estate of the poor, is a Father of the fatherless, defendeth the cause of the widow, imparts peace to the humble habitations of the faithful, and de-

delivers the captive from his dungeon ; while to the refractory children of disobedience, He assigns the barren soil of their own neglected talent, leaving to them the pains of spiritual want and scarcity.

Ver. 7—10. In this fine apostrophe to the Most High God, to which the Psalmist was moved by some strong impulse of enthusiasm, carrying him back into the remotest history of the manifestation by Jehovah of his power and presence among his people, and recalling our attention in a few words to the most stupendous miracles that have ever been recorded of Omnipotence, we see at once the whole panorama of Israel's primitive rebellion ; her punishment ; the calling of Moses, preparatory to her restoration from slavery ; the long and fearful contest, not of the Israelites themselves, but of the God of their father Abraham, with the blindness and obstinacy of their Egyptian tyrants ; their triumphant Exodus, or going forth from the house of bondage ; the exasperation and pursuit of their foes ; the signal manifestations of the Divine Presence in all their wanderings, when Jehovah went forth before his people, when He went through the wilderness, until the decisive hour of their final deliverance, by the overthrow of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea. During the whole of this eventful period of forty years, it might truly be said that the earth shook, and the heavens dropped at the presence of God : for not only was the divine power displayed in terrific signs and wonders, but for the sake of his chosen people the clouds dropped fatness ; they dropped upon the dwellings of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoiced on every side. The Lord rained down upon them manna for to eat, and filled them with the bread of heaven. To this, probably, as well as other blessings from above, the Psalmist herein alludes :—Thou, O God, sentest a gracious rain upon thine inheritance, and refreshedst it when it was weary. Thou, O God, hast of thy goodness prepared for the poor

Ver. 11—13. This is the portion of the Psalm which is

considered to bear a dramatic character. In the preceding verse to these it is said, Thy congregation shall dwell therein, that is, in the land of Canaan, which God had promised should be the inheritance of his chosen people. And when the kings and armies of that land were discomfited, she that tarried at home, (for this is the version of our Bible, and is more explicit,) she divided the spoil—that is Israel, being at length in quiet possession of the long-promised land, is enjoying the fruits of her past labours and sufferings; and, as if surrounded by her children and household, is poetically and dramatically represented as consoling them by the contrast of their past bondage and degradation, with the opening prospects of liberty, prosperity, and prolonged dominion over the heathen nations. And the beauty of the simile in which this contrast is depicted has scarcely been exceeded by any gifted poet of any age:—Though ye have lien among the pots, that is, the flesh-pots and furnaces of Egypt; yet shall your coming beauty and brightness and purity equal those of the dove; that fair emblem of peace and love and holiness, whose burnished feathers reflect all the hues of light shed upon them by the glory of the heavens. In the next verse, though the prophet again takes up the thread which had been dropped to introduce this beautiful episode, he pursues the same figurative style of language, still alluding to the Lord's inheritance, his congregation, them of his household.

Ver. 14—16. Notwithstanding the abject condition to which they had been reduced during the four hundred years of their bondage in Egypt, yet was their deliverance to lead to the appointed period of their regeneration, social, moral, and spiritual; when, heathen kings and nations being scattered for their sake, they should be freed from the contamination of idolatrous influence and example, freed from the temptations to unhallowed alliances, and enfranchised from the tyranny of godless rulers. Thence, as the Psalmist predicated, they should become white as the snow on Mount Salmon. And looking onward from that

distant period down to his own age, when he had seen the Ark of the Lord established upon the hill of Sion, it was a natural impulse of his pious spirit which urged him to the expression of his thankfulness, that God had vouchsafed, through so many generations, to maintain his covenant with his people Israel, and to afford them daily evidences of his continued care and protection. And in his record of this view of Israel's pre-eminence, he breaks forth in as bold a poetic figure, expressive of the keenest irony, as was ever hazarded by the genius of man. He addresses the heathen inhabitants of the hilly countries under the metaphor of the hills themselves. You of Bashan may boast of your lofty eminence! but as the hill of Basan, so is God's hill; even an high hill, as the hill of Basan! Why are ye Bashanites so swollen with envy and enmity against the hill of Sion? This is God's hill, in the which it pleaseth Him to dwell: yea, the Lord will abide in it for ever! And so, until the consummation of Israel's guilt in the rejection of Messiah, was that people the peculiar care of Heaven, realizing to the very letter that beautiful picture preserved in the song of Moses, setting forth God's mercy:—The Lord's portion is his people: Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in a waste howling wilderness: He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him.—(*Deut.* xxxii.)

Ver. 17—23. The Psalmist here falls into a rapturous vision of the future triumph of the Church, to be perfected in that day, when the long-expected Messiah should have accomplished his gracious undertaking in her behalf; and re-ascending to Heaven to claim again, and for ever, the glory which He had left, should be greeted by the heavenly host in all the jubilant splendours of celestial might, majesty, and dominion. That

the subject of his prophetic vision could be none other than the incarnate Son of God, is made clear by the minutely descriptive terms employed by the inspired penman, in detailing the objects undertaken and accomplished by our blessed Redeemer, previous to his final exaltation to the throne of his glory in the Heaven of heavens:—Thou art gone up on high: Thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts for men: yea, even for thine enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among them. In his Epistle to the Ephesians (c. iv.) St. Paul quotes a part of this prophetic passage in proof of our Lord's Divinity; for, says he, Now that Christ ascended, what is it, but that He also descended first? There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all: but unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ: wherefore the Prophet David saith, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. It was by the final consummation of his work of mercy, at his re-ascension into Heaven, that the Son of God imparted the gifts of the Holy Spirit unto men; namely, his chosen servants; for having thus destroyed the power of Satan, abolished the dominion of sin, and triumphed over death, He endued them with the power of the Holy Ghost, each according to the measure of his gift, to preach the glad tidings of salvation; and imparting such energy to their preaching, as should effect the conversion of as many as should be saved; and with whom the graces of the Holy Spirit should dwell thereafter for ever. For these inestimable gifts, though in his day seen only by the eye of faith, the inspired writer exclaims, Praised be the Lord daily; even the God who helpeth us, and poureth his benefits upon us! For the Lord hath promised that He will bring his people together again as he had done of old, from the periods of their captivity, when they shall obtain a final triumph over all their enemies;

and when at the dread day of his just judgment, He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other.

Ver. 24—35. The opening verses of this passage bear an evident allusion to the joyful observances with which the ark was transferred to the Tabernacle in Zion; (*2 Sam.* vi;) and they are made introductory to the long anthem of thanksgiving, which in its primary sense has respect to this solemn jubilee alone. It is probable that nothing since has exceeded the magnificence of the Jewish Church in all its musical adjuncts to divine worship. We know not to what degree of perfection music as a science had reached in those days; but the very number and variety of their instruments, and the multitude of the singers engaged in their religious services, are proofs that the most perfect harmony must have been acquired; for in such a mass of sound no medium could have existed between that and the most intolerable discord. We have proofs moreover, that the greater proportion of the Psalms, whether those written by David, or those of other inspired penmen, were used in the services of the Temple, or for solemn occasions of national rejoicing and thanksgiving. I offer these remarks in illustration of the simple description of the Psalmist in the 25th verse. The passage which immediately follows is a noble exhortation to the people, that they rest not in the mere ceremonials of outward worship; but that they offer the sacrifices of the heart to the God of their salvation, in sincere thankfulness for the strength imparted to them, whereby they have been enabled to subdue their numerous foes, and to become firmly established in religious and social freedom. And their present safety is manifested by the presence of the smallest of the tribes among them, as well as that of their wisest nobles and counsellors, and the chiefs of the tribes whose lot of inheritance is the farthest from Jerusalem, even the princes of Zabulon and

Nephthali. It is said in an old Index to the Bible, that 30,000 of the choice men of Israel attended this festival, singing this 68th Psalm. As touching the peculiar expression, 'There is little Benjamin their ruler, we must look upon it as bearing a double interpretation, historical and prophetic. Saul the first anointed king of Israel, was of the tribe of Benjamin. St. Matthew, who quotes from the prophet Micah, (c. v, 2,) contends that this tribe deserves no longer to be treated with contempt, by reason that Christ Himself should be born in their land:—And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not least among the Princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people Israel. The Psalmist goes on to predict what shall be the consequences of the establishment of the Jewish Church in Zion: that heathen kings, for the Temple's sake, shall bring presents to Jerusalem; when the spearmen and mighty men of Egypt, they that delight in war, shall be scattered among the beasts of the field, which were the very objects of Egyptian idolatry; when they should be finally overcome, and humbly bring pieces of silver, to propitiate the mercy of those whose forefathers they had held in cruel bondage: for then shall not only the Princes of Egypt come forth from their land in abject submission to the conquering tribes of Israel; but even the Morians' land, the country of the Moors or Ethiopians, shall also soon stretch out her hands unto God, in acknowledgment of his supreme power over all things in heaven and in earth. After this prophetic review, the Psalmist breaks forth in strains of praise and adoration, of which, not even the great occasion of the establishment of the ark in Zion, can scarcely be deemed worthy; and the Christian Church is therefore fully borne out in appropriating them to the celebration of that great spiritual triumph, which was completed to the knowledge and understanding of men; when after they had witnessed the ascension of Christ into heaven, the promise which He had previously made to his disciples was fulfilled:—

I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever: the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you. This was the promise: with its fulfilment on the day of Pentecost, and the manner of it, you, my brethren, are all well advised. It is impossible, I would hope, that any professing member of the Christian Church is ignorant of the wonderful and instructive scene represented in the second chapter of the Acts. And a due sense of the importance of that narrative, to the establishment of our individual faith, and to the support of our hope of final salvation, must prompt us to join in the spirit of that devout thanksgiving with which this Psalm concludes.

[Read *v.* 32—35.]

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XXVI.

PSALM 69.

As this Psalm is appointed by our Church to be used in the service on Good Friday, this is sufficient proof of its adaptation by our most able divines to our Saviour's passion. As the work of David, we must therefore consider it as predictive, while he is speaking in his own person as the type of the Messiah. The imprecations commencing at the 23rd verse, the great Apostle has applied to the Jews in his Epistle to the Romans, (xi, 9, 10,) as foreshewing their judicial blindness and its consequences. The 26th verse is also applied to Judas in Acts i, 20.

Ver. 1—5. It appears, from the extraordinary emphasis of the terms here used, that though David may have intended to describe his own sufferings and experience, yet that under the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit he is compelled to utter such language as in its fullest sense should apply only to Christ and Him crucified; that is, under the mental agonies he endured in the approach of his final suffering. The fifth verse may seem to present a difficulty, which however is removed by the words of the Prophet Isaiah:—The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all: for the transgression of his people was He stricken. By his suffering he paid their debt; thus bearing the reproach of owing that, for which He had made Himself responsible only by voluntary suretyship: He paid for them that which He had never received. And it is in their name, as their representative, that the Saviour confesses that his simpleness (or folly) is known to God; and that from Him his faults (or iniquities) are not hidden. He had taken *their* sins on Himself.

Ver. 6—12. Here “the Son of God is made to prefer a petition to the Father, that his disciples may not be scandalized on account of the shamefulness of his passion, nor be tempted to relinquish their trust in God, at beholding his only and

beloved Son forsaken on the cross: since it was not for any demerit of his own, but the sake of God's glory as well as man's salvation, that He bore reproach, and that shame covered his face."* Our Lord acknowledges himself to be of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh; and therefore regarded the Jews as his brethren: and his sufferings were embittered by the reflection that they, above all others, should treat Him as a stranger and an alien: whereas, while He came on earth to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, the foremost and special purpose of his mission of mercy was, to be the glory of his people Israel; as upon one occasion he confessed—I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And it was his very zeal in their behalf which provoked their stubborn malignity towards Him; and by that malignity was he finally consumed, eaten up. Their pride was offended: they had looked for a Messiah who should come among them in all the pride, pomp, and circumstance of worldly splendour and power: therefore was the meek and lowly Jesus despised and rejected of them: his virtues were his crimes to their blinded vision and their hardened hearts; and the more He displayed these virtues in their sight, the more He wept and chastened Himself for their sake, so much the more did they deride and persecute Him: from the rulers who sat in the gates, that is, in the judgment-seats of the land, down to the very lowest of the Jewish rabble: even the drunkards made their songs upon Him. Yet had He no refuge but that which is still left to his humble disciples, in their seasons of affliction and persecution.

Ver. 13—19. The same figures are used in these verses as in the opening of the Psalm—the pit, the mire, and the deep waters—all expressive of the soul in affliction. David had his trials, but he had also his triumphs. The Messiah whom he foreshadowed was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, even from his birth, and in every passing period of his life and

* Bp. Horne.

ministry his perils thickened around Him, until they were concentrated in the clouds and darkness of death; when Nature herself, sympathizing with the sorrows of her Creator, veiled herself in the garb of mourning; when there was darkness over the whole land from the sixth unto the ninth hour, and the earth did quake, and the rocks were rent, and the graves opened; when even the darker hearts of the centurion, and of those that were with him, watching Jesus, were softened until they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God! But whether we appropriate this prayer exclusively to David's humbled spirit under some peculiar affliction, or to our Saviour in his agonies, it is of itself remarkable for the intensity of its expression, both of terror and of confidence. But we must bear in mind, brethren, that it was in our frail and sensitive nature, that the Son of God sustained all those agonies of mind and body, which are recorded as his unvarying experience, from the commencement of his ministry until his gracious work was accomplished. It might not have been revealed to David by the Holy Spirit, that the Messiah, whose advent was the subject of his strong faith, should be verily and indeed the Son of God; but he knew, probably, that all the sacrifices ordained under the legal dispensation, were typical of one great sacrifice to be offered for universal sin: for that which attaches to our nature from the moment of its being *must* be universal: and the doctrine of original sin could not have been rejected by any of the enlightened descendants of Adam, from the moment that the history of the creation became known; though perhaps less freely acknowledged *as a doctrine*, than since the opening of the Christian dispensation. David, however, admits and proclaims it—Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me. To return, then, to the argument, that it was in our nature the Son of God bore the penalty of this nature's transgression; all the language of the Psalmist is appropriate to the Redeemer's condition. As the representative

of sinful man, lying under the sentence of condemnation to death, that is, death eternal; all the outward humiliation, all the internal penitence, all the utter dependence on the free mercy of God, which became our offending race, became Him; were indeed needful in Him, for the perfecting of the great atonement. Upon that amazing undertaking He had entered: by his voluntary relinquishment of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, He had committed Himself (so to speak) to a bondage from which there was no deliverance; He had put his hand to the plough, and could not look back; He had undertaken to win the kingdom of heaven for all who else had been outcasts: and the time of his travail was the time of hope:—Lord, I make my prayer unto Thee in an acceptable time; and that prayer is an instructive lesson to all who would follow in his steps, that they may be partakers of his reward. It is the prayer of conscious danger, of weakness, and of utter dependence upon the power of divine grace to save and deliver. O hold Thou up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not: (*Psalms* xvii, 5:) take me out of the mire of sin, that I sink not: deliver me from the provoking of all men, especially of them that hate me: let not the deep and smiling waters of temptation beguile me: preserve me from the overwhelming water-floods of the ungodliness which surrounds me on every side; lest they swallow me up, and the pit of the nethermost hell close her mouth upon me for ever! It was the privilege of the great Apostle of the Gentiles to leave upon record the finest imaginable illustration of the fervency and constancy in prayer, which signalized the earthly ministry of our Redeemer; who in the days of his flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all

them that obey Him. (*Heb.* v, 7.) Obedience, my brethren, is the strongest evidence we can give of the sincerity of our profession; and in no other manner can we render our obedience so acceptable as in the endeavour to follow Christ's holy example: in that example the most prominent feature is the exercise of habitual fervent prayer; and of all written prayers that are preserved for our instruction, none can be found so brief, and at the same time so comprehensive of our most urgent necessities, as the remaining portion of the passage upon which we are now reflecting. (Read 17—19.) As brevity is the soul of wit, so is it also the spirit of prayer; for which we have this high authority:—God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few. (*Eccles.* v, 2.)

Ver. 20—22. These verses must be exclusively appropriated to the case of the crucified Saviour—they are descriptive of his recorded actual sufferings; and only one passage in them needs explanation—Thy rebuke hath broken my heart: and this needs only a reference to what has already been said on the subject, and the consequences to Himself, of Christ's having taken our nature upon Him. The repentant sinner, if he be conscious that, whatever are his sufferings, they are the inflictions of divine anger, will be touched most sensibly by the conviction that it is the rebuke of the Almighty, administered in love to his soul: he will therefore sustain a conflict of feelings which press heavily upon his heart. Our Redeemer took our nature upon Him, and must needs bear its infirmities.

Ver. 23—29. These seeming imprecations are better understood (than in the sense which they bear in our native language) as predictions of what shall happen to the avowed enemies of Christ—them who persecute Him whom God hath smitten, and league together for the purpose of vexing those whom God hath wounded. There is a portion of the 109th Psalm composed of similar terms; and the commentary thereupon is of sufficient length to preclude the necessity of dwelling upon these verses.*

* See Note, page 8.

Ver. 30—31. In these verses we have the renewal of the personal prayer, founded upon complaint, and relieved by the anticipation of future cause for thanksgiving; and by drawing a comparison between the value of legal sacrifices and the more spiritual offering of a humbled spirit, and a broken and contrite heart, the Psalmist encourages the meek and lowly penitent to trust in the help of the Most High. This is in accordance with the prominent doctrines of the Gospel dispensation, recommended as they are throughout the evangelical records by the example of Christ Himself, and by his own gracious invitation:—Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest: take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls: for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. This it is to be born of God: it is the practice of this precept which is the evidence of the faith that overcometh the world, in all its provocations, its trials, and its temptations: and blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven. It is a remarkable feature of the Psalms throughout, that speaking as we must admit by the Holy Spirit, David founds his own hope, (and offers the consolation of his own experience,) upon the consciousness of possessing a humble spirit in the sight of God. This rich possession is that which he alludes to as often as he speaks of the poor, and of the special care which our Heavenly Father taketh of all who are thus endowed by his grace. It is not of mere temporal poverty that the Psalmist so often speaks, in language similar to the passage here—the Lord heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners: for though it is not to be doubted, that the poor in this world's possessions enjoy (if they feel it) a larger share of the immediate care of God in the general dispensation of his Providence, as standing more in need of it than the rich, and having a stronger claim upon the divine beneficence; He hath declared by his prophet, (*Jer.* xvii.) I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to

give to every man according to his ways. And this is a blessed provision of divine mercy, forasmuch as it is to the believing son of poverty a consoling assurance, that he is as certainly the heir of glory as the most favoured child of fortune; while he is guarded from the influence of many of this world's sinful allurements. It is also an encouragement to him to cherish the humble spirit of godly fear and love, as a foil to the privations and sorrows which may be his allotted portion in this life; for then he will feel, that these light afflictions which are but for a moment, shall work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; if he cultivate that humility which is the grace and ornament of the Christian character; then may he experience the blessed consciousness, that when he is afflicted and tried beyond his every-day experience, when he is poor and in heaviness, the help of his God shall lift him up. Let him therefore praise the Name of God with a song, and magnify it with thanksgiving. Let the humble consider this, and be glad. Seek ye after God, and your *soul* shall live.

Ver. 35—37. The general application of this Psalm to Christ's passion leaves us no other possible interpretation of these closing verses, than as an enunciation of the joyful vision of the Redeemer, at the close of his mortal sufferings; when one burst of universal harmony greeted his triumphant spirit, expressive of the gratitude and praise and adoration of all things in heaven and earth and under the earth, for their creation and preservation; but more especially for the restoration of man, the lord of all, to his lost dominion in the earth; and for his redemption from the power of death to that bright reversion of endless glory, which was originally prepared for him in heaven. The earnest of which consummation was the perfecting of the covenant of grace and mercy, by the triumph of the God-man over our nature's last enemy; whereby Christ's spiritual dominion upon the earth was established for all ages, and his throne set up in Sion, and his judgment-seat in the

cities of Judah; that men may dwell there in the beauty of holiness, anticipating their admission into the New Jerusalem; where a great multitude of the redeemed, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stand before the throne and before the Lamb, crying with a loud voice, and saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb! For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. (*Rev. vii.*)

PSALM 70.

The language of this Psalm is exactly the same in character, and nearly in words, as a portion of the 40th Psalm, which has been already brought under consideration. It is not necessary therefore to repeat the comment.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XXVII.

PSALM 71.

This Psalm is supposed to have been written during that painful event in the life of king David, the rebellion of his son Absalom; when his father was well stricken in years, and was nevertheless driven out of Jerusalem, and with only a faithful few was compelled to hide himself in the wilderness, until it pleased God to overthrow the counsels of his rebellious son and subjects. The entire history of this unnatural proceeding is given at length in the second book of Samuel, together with a Psalm of thanksgiving composed by David to celebrate his deliverance, the conclusion of which is said by the historian to be the last words of the son of Jesse; the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel. If therefore this 71st Psalm, which we are now about to consider, was written, as suggested, during the height of the good king's troubles, we shall not wonder at that uniformity of complaint, and that expression of intense agony of mind, which almost excludes the possibility of separating its parts for the purposes of commentary. The prevailing spirit, however, is that of a fervid piety, manifesting itself in the most unreserved dependence upon the protecting power, and submission to the all-righteous will, of God.

Ver. 1—5. We see, my brethren, as we advance through the Book of Psalms, how prominent a feature in the character of David is that strong consciousness of integrity which enables him to go boldly before the footstool of Divine Mercy, with the plea of his own faithfulness, to obtain help in his time of need. The opening of this Psalm is an instance to the purpose—In Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust! Notwithstanding therefore the dangers and sorrows which beset him, he relies on the past promises of God to help him. We know, nevertheless, that the history of David's life presents many instances of frailty, and some of even a deep degree of guilt, under the force of temptation. This, however, furnishes an argument to us all, of the necessity as well as of the efficacy of repentance, and of

the pardoning mercy of our God. The *trials* experienced by David, were so many temptations; but they shook not his strong faith. He could confidently refer to past seasons of his life, wherein he had been faithful, and he could still appeal to the Searcher of Hearts, that notwithstanding his many lapses and backslidings from the perfect Law of the Lord, he had held fast his integrity under the severest afflictions, knowing them to be divine chastisements permitted and appointed for his good. For even under these he refers to the mercies he had experienced from his youth up, and upon that experience he builds the pledge of his continued faithfulness. Through Thee have I been holden up ever since I was born: my praise shall be always of Thee.

Ver. 6—11. Many an honest man and sincere Christian has been made to feel, that by the slanderous malignity of a few he has been made to appear like a monster unto many. Such is the evil disposition of our nature to imagine ourselves exalted in character in proportion as another is debased, though by the most unjust aspersions. This was the manner in which Absalom commenced his rebellion against his royal father, by insinuating that none could obtain justice under the government of David, however good and right may be their cause; and by professing himself to be ready and willing to administer justice to every man, if he had but the power. Oh that I were made a judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause, might come unto me; and I would do him justice! So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. And the natural result of this unnatural treachery was, that the kingdom of Israel was well nigh lost to his father, until God's Providence interposed to punish the treacherous son by a violent and singular death. The language of this Psalm does not indicate that David cared principally for the loss of his throne and his authority as a king; but that he suffered most from the alienation of the people's affections, and the destruction.

of their loyalty towards him, by the unjust slanders in which they indulged, for an excuse of their falling away from him in favour of his ambitious and undutiful son. For he does not implore the Almighty for the restoration of his kingdom, but that those who do him evil may be covered with shame and dishonour: for that his sure trust is still in his God, to whom the secrets of his heart are known, that he shall be judged according to right, and that in the dispensation of the divine justice, his integrity may be made manifest, and his enemies be put to silence. There is a very pathetic turn given to the prayer of the good old king in the bitterness of his anguish—Cast me not away in the time of age! forsake me not when my strength faileth me! It deeply afflicted his soul that his name should go down to posterity with the taint which slander had for a season cast upon it: when his rebellious people were crying out in their imaginary triumph, God hath forsaken him: persecute him, and take him: for there is none to deliver him! But his prayer was heard—Go not far from me O God: my God haste Thee to help me!

Ver. 12—16. Patience under trials is a virtue which is cherished only where there is previously established a strong faith in the protection and defence of an all-governing Power. It is folly to preach patience to those who have only the hope that an unprincipled and ungodly foe will at some time or other of his own accord abate his pride, or assuage his malice. The patience of the humble sufferer is always an encouragement to an enemy's perseverance in evil; but the sufferer's trust in God enables Him to go on from strength to strength, until his deliverance be wrought by an unseen and irresistible arm. So was it with David: he vowed patiently to abide alway; and in the confidence of deliverance to praise his God more and more; to speak daily of his righteousness and salvation as a never-failing refuge; towards which and from which he could go forth, not in his own strength, but in the strength of his God: for that

he had experienced the loving-kindness of the Lord from his youth up, and had always delighted himself in speaking of the wondrous works which he had witnessed in his own behalf, in the dispensations of Divine Grace and Divine Providence towards him; from the early age when God had chosen him to be his servant, and took him away from the sheepfolds, with the gracious design that the son of Jesse might rule over the chosen seed; that in the exalted character of their king he might feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. This portion of the Psalm is therefore concluded with the repetition of his prayer, that God may not forsake him in his old age, until the living generation should have witnessed the strength of Omnipotence exercised in his behalf, and for the instruction of all others yet for to come.

Ver. 17—22. Here, reviewing his past life, David acknowledges that the wonderful vicissitudes he had experienced were so many manifestations of the perfect righteousness of the divine government: for that none could be likened unto God, who had done so great things for him. Great troubles and adversities had been permitted to befall him; but He who had ordered them, had turned and refreshed his chosen servant, and had even brought him from the very verge of the grave, or as the Psalmist expresses it, from the deep of the earth again, to bestow great honour upon him, and to comfort him on every side. And it was literally true, that David had been brought from the deep of the earth, when, hiding himself in the cave of Adullam from the savage madness of Saul, he escaped destruction only by the fidelity of his beloved friend Jonathan. Indeed, the entire history of the life of the shepherd boy is one of the deepest interest, and rich in lessons of the divine goodness on the one hand, and of unshaken faith on the other. And in his contemplation of that experience, David concludes this enumeration of the mercies vouchsafed to him, by the renewal of his oft-repeated vows of grateful praise to the Giver

of all his good. I will praise Thee and thy faithfulness, O God: unto Thee will I sing, O Thou Holy One of Israel. My lips shall rejoice, and so will my soul, whom Thou hast delivered. For they are confounded and brought unto shame, that seek to do me evil.

PSALM 72.

This Psalm opens with a prayer of David in behalf of his son Solomon, who is here styled the king and the king's son; he being the first among the monarchs of Israel to whom this double dignity belonged. The Psalm is also prophetic of the peaceful and glorious reign of Solomon; and in many of its passages is thought to be figurative of the Messiah's kingdom upon earth; as those passages speak of a perpetuity of dominion, which cannot belong to earthly sovereigns. The whole concludes with a doxology similar in its sublime fervency to that which in our Church Services is appointed to be said or sung at the end of every Psalm.

Ver. 1—4. It is said in the book of Samuel, which records the birth of Solomon, that the Lord loved him; and in another place, which describes the manner in which God was pleased to confer on him the gift of superior wisdom, that Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father. And in these verses of the Psalm the prayer is offered on his behalf, that the judgments and righteousness of God may be given to him: foretelling the happiness that shall be the lot of the chosen people during his reign. Plenteousness is the promised reward of their righteousness.

Ver. 5. As the opening verse was a direct appeal to the God of Heaven for his blessing; so in this verse the pious king turns again to the vision of the moral and religious effects upon the minds of the people, upon whom the blessings of a wise and peaceful government shall be abundantly bestowed. The character of Solomon from the beginning of his reign was such as to assure to his people the high privileges of God's special protection; for when the Lord appeared unto him in a dream,

and bade him ask what should be given him, Solomon, like the virtuous Mary, chose that good part which should not be taken from him: he asked for an understanding heart, to judge the people, and that he might discern between good and bad. And the speech pleased the Lord. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast asked riches for thyself, neither hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment;—behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any be like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour. The truthfulness of this copious promise is fully exemplified in the succeeding passages of the Psalm, and which we are now about to consider.

Ver. 6—19. These remaining verses of the Psalm abound with promises, which in our study of it we may apply to the blessings of the reign of Solomon in a limited measure; but to the everlasting dominion of the Messiah without measure. The three leading verses of this portion are fully applicable only to the spiritual kingdom of Christ, in strict accordance with the divine promises announced by the prophets Isaiah and Hosea—I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with

peace. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon: his branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree. We come, however, to those portions of the Psalm which apply exclusively to an earthly sovereignty, and exactly accord with the facts of the history of Solomon's reign. The heathen, they who dwell in the wilderness of spiritual darkness, were made to kneel before him, and his enemies to lick the dust. The kings of surrounding nations, as we read in the first Book of Kings, gave him presents, and brought gifts unto him: Pharaoh king of Egypt, and Hiram King of Tyre, and Queen Sheba. They honoured Solomon for his great wisdom; they fell down before him, and did him service. All these honours and distinctions did David predict in behalf of his son, by reason of the righteousness in which he should reign and rule over his people: for the father foresees in the son all those virtues which distinguish the just ruler from the tyrant and oppressor. And as the pious king says of himself* in the 78th Psalm, that *he* fed his people with a faithful and true heart, and ruled them prudently with all his power; so he foretels of Solomon, that he shall deliver the poor when he crieth (for justice); the needy also, and him that hath no helper. He shall be favourable to the simple and needy, and shall preserve the souls of the poor: he shall deliver their souls from falsehood and wrong; and dear shall their blood be in his sight. Then the Psalmist returns to the contemplation of the temporal and eternal blessings which shall recompense the fulfilment of the duties of that high trust, which had been committed to Solomon's hands by the Almighty Ruler of Heaven and Earth. The riches which he had not asked for himself were bestowed on him; for to him was given of the gold of Arabia; and it is elsewhere recorded, that of the gold of Ophir he possessed in one year not less in value than was

* This supposes that the Psalm was written by David. But the reader is referred to that Psalm.

equal to 400 millions of pounds of our money: the honour which he had not asked for was granted, for it is said of him that prayer and praise should be daily offered unto him; that his name should endure for ever, and should remain under the sun among the posterities: and that even they should be blessed through him, and that all the heathen should praise him. Thus, my brethren, was exemplified in the life of king Solomon, the truth of his own proverb, that a wise son maketh a glad father: for no parental joy or boasting can exceed that, in which the Psalmist gives vent to his feelings in this grateful prayer and thank-offering. It is a specimen of pious joyfulness for one of the greatest blessings that can be vouchsafed to us in our chequered pilgrimage through this mingled scene of bliss and sorrow. Children are a gift and heritage that cometh of the Lord: but whether they shall prove a blessing or a shame and reproach, depend in a great degree upon the manner in which the parental duties are fulfilled. We are taught that if we train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it; and human experience confirms the truth of the maxim. If our offspring are brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, a good foundation is laid for the time to come. From the general tenor of Solomon's life, the glory he attained to under God's watchful Providence, and from the wisdom he manifested, we must presume that in his youth he was not neglected: and the pious rejoicing of his father David over him is such as he could scarcely have indulged, had he been conscious of parental neglect; for his praises on Solomon's behalf are offered to the God of the spirits of all flesh. [Read *v.* 18, 19.]

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XXVIII.

PSALM 73.

This Psalm opens with a reflection, arising out of a temptation into which the prophet confesses that he had fallen, from his having thought too much and enviously of the prosperity of wicked men in this life; but the natural discontent, consequent upon this false view of such examples, is corrected by the power of grace; which holds up the advantages of a religious view of God's providential dispensations, and the difficulty of our judging of their course and their ultimate design; because of our natural disinclination to fix our thoughts upon the sure and certain judgment that shall distinguish between good and evil; whereby we suffer our envy to prevail over wiser and more just considerations. The Psalmist confesses, however, that his feelings were the consequence of his ignorance; but since divine grace had opened his eyes to the true understanding of these things, he falls into the warmest expressions of his full trust and confidence in the mercy and goodness of Him who ordereth all things both in heaven and in earth.

Ver. 1. It was by a very natural process that the Psalmist should thus confidently express himself at the very commencement of those confessions which he is about to make of his past errors; for these errors had been passing over his mind before he had written them for our learning; and in spite of his cherished prejudices, he had come to the conclusion in which he breaks forth—Truly God is loving!

Ver. 2, 3. The distrusting of God's love and provident care over us is a very common disease of the human heart: and it arises frequently from the temptation of seeing the ungodly in possession of more of the temporal bounty of heaven than ourselves; as if to acquire and to possess riches and honour, through our short pilgrimage here, were the sole end and aim of our being. But against this moral disease, the sacred writer gradually prescribes the antidote and the remedy, the prevention and the cure. But he also dwells at some length upon the

temptation to this false view of the orderings of Providence and Grace.

Ver. 4, 5. We occasionally see that the long-suffering of God sometimes permits the ungodly to enjoy a long life of health and strength, and freedom from the sicknesses and painful disorders which rack the poor man's frame, and bring him with sorrow and torment to the grave. And those temporal calamities also, which overwhelm the poor righteous man's small concerns, approach not the borders of the wealthy sinner. The prophet Jeremiah makes a fine reflection on the subject—Righteous art Thou, O Lord, when I plead with Thee: yet let me talk with Thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are they happy that deal very treacherously? Let us, my brethren, mark their progress, as described by the Psalmist.

Ver. 6, 7. It is scarcely possible to add any thing to these plain sentences, which would make them plainer. The signs of the proud heart are seldom to be mistaken in the outward man. He who is truly religious will be truly humble in his carriage and behaviour towards others, whatever worldly wealth or honours may have fallen to his lot: while riches that have been too easily gotten, are a snare to him whose religion is only a profession.

Ver. 8—11. It is most true that the proud rich man corrupts others, and is thus a dangerous person to his neighbours: for there will always be found those who will disgrace themselves by flattering the vain conceit of the wealthy, at the cost of truth and honesty, and in the face of the most well-known facts. And verily these have their reward in the secret scorn and contempt of the very wretches they serve. So true is the saying of Solomon, that the prosperity of fools destroyeth them; and they in their turn become the betrayers and destroyers of others. The people fall unto them, as the Psalmist's expression is, under the prospect of some imaginary benefit; but the rich

and proud are they who suck thereout the advantage; though that also is but a momentary gain, and of no real value. But the faults on both sides are those of cold unbelief. Neither the proud man nor his flatterers regard the end of their several sins—they have not God in all their thoughts, except when His Providence is taken up as a matter of doubt to strengthen and confirm their unbelief—Tush! how should God perceive it? This is the language of their hearts.

Ver. 12—14. Our corrupt nature is apt, with such examples before our eyes, to imagine that virtue and godliness are unrewarded; and that therefore the Almighty Disposer of all things is partial in his judgments. The Psalmist here confesses that even he had cherished these unholy doubts, until deeper reflection, prompted by divine grace, had opened this truth to his understanding.

Ver. 15—19. It is, my brethren, only in our religious exercises that we can subdue our thoughts to the whole truth: how needful it is, therefore, that we should avail ourselves of the high privilege of the Sabbath-day services; for the world and its concerns will have their full share of our attention during the six days which are given for our allotted labour. But it is in the Sanctuary that our thoughts are most effectually subdued to the things that belong unto our everlasting peace. Here it is that we may best reflect upon the vanity of human greatness, the folly of human pride. And here we ought never to neglect the assembling of ourselves together, at the appointed seasons; to exercise our hearts in the reverence, fear, and love of Him, in whose hands are all the issues of our life, through time and in eternity.

Ver. 20, 21. It was, as the Psalmist confesses, by his attendance upon the services of the Sanctuary, that he was brought to know and admit his former foolish murmurings against the dispensations of Divine Providence. And, moreover, as in the following verses of the Psalm, that a complete

change was wrought in his views of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

Ver. 22—27. Nothing can exceed the warmth of the confidence which the converted murmurer now reposes in the God of his salvation. Here are the expressions of a mind perfectly at ease, and resting on the loving-kindness of the Lord, of which he had now obtained an immoveable conviction. He seems to say, Hear now the conclusion of the whole matter:—I have seen and am convinced of the emptiness of all worldly greatness which is not sanctified by godliness! Set your minds therefore, brethren, betimes to refuse the evil, and choose the good; that you may secure to yourselves an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

PSALM 74.

In the name of the Church of God, the inspired Teacher here speaks of the persecutions she endures, and implores the continuance of the divine protection and favour; pleading her purchase and redemption, as promised of old, and hereafter to be completed in the self-sacrifice of the Messiah that should come.

Ver. 1—4. If we look upon these words as the utterance of an individual who is bemoaning the decrease of religion and the dishonour done to the Sanctuary of God, by its haughty and powerful enemies, we shall see in them a most pathetic intercessory prayer, and the evidence of such feelings as ought to possess every heart, in seasons when Religion itself seems endangered by the dissensions of professors, and the enmity of the avowed infidel. For all are more deeply interested than they think or believe, in the peace and prosperity of Christ's kingdom upon earth. Wherefore, my brethren, it behoves us earnestly to pray for its preservation, and the privileges we enjoy under its protecting shadow.

Ver. 5. This was, no doubt, the case in the days of David; we have had the same experience in our own Christian country

within the last 200 years, when the triumphant mobs of the king-murderer, Cromwell, ravaged the land, despoiling our Cathedrals and Churches, stabling their horses therein, setting up their banners, and indulging themselves in riot and debaucheries of every kind; until the abomination of desolation spread over the holy places. The actors in these scenes were the wretches who first sowed the baneful seeds of dissent over the whole country, under the false plea of liberty of conscience—a cry, of which we hear so much in the present day, from the corrupt offspring of those godless hypocrites. But as the fathers of this abomination were deserted of God, so are their children of the present day left very much to the guidance of their own evil imaginations—making out the case threatened of old by the prophet Ezekiel—Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them? They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, the Lord saith: and the Lord hath not sent *them*. And they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. Therefore, thus saith the Lord, Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies; therefore behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God. It is in vain, my brethren, to produce arguments or facts to those who have given themselves over to the abominations of the dissenting system. But if they would seriously consider the one great fact which they all know, namely, the numerous divisions into which Dissent is broken up, even the wise in their own conceit would doubt whether any one of these divisions could be right in the sight of God; since all of them have their foundation in the corrupt will of man, and the pride of the rebellious heart. This is the true history of Dissent.

Ver. 6—9. The first of these verses is not very clearly interpreted; the meaning is, however, that the builders of the Temple were famous and honoured among men for their excellent work: but that the blind zeal of the heathen of those days,

like the Round-heads of more modern times, had no more respect for the Sanctuary of the Living God, the place where his honour dwelleth, than for the hallowed work of man's gifted skill—they broke down all with axes and hammers. The entire fabric of the first Temple was burnt to the ground by the proud and impious Nebuchadnezzar. The gates of the second Temple were set on fire by the Romans nearly 170 years before the coming of Christ. And it was soon after the murder of our own king Charles, that the mad fanatics of our own land polluted the temples and the altars of our Christian worship. And which of these three classes, think you, brethren, were the least guilty in the sight of God? Certainly not they who committed their abominations under the mask of the religion of the gospel. And these were our first dissenters. For the heathen and the schismatics said alike in their hearts, Let us make havoc of them altogether! It would be almost presumptuous to separate the passages which make up the remainder of this instructive Psalm. They form together a moving appeal to the divine protection, which ought not to be broken into parts.

Ver. 10—24. The prophet complains of the darkness which so surrounded the true Israel of God, that they could no longer discover any token of his Presence, any assurance of his still protecting arm, or any hope of deliverance from the destructive tyranny of their foes. But this does not quench the confidence of the pious king of Israel. His faith prevailed over all the discouraging terrors around him, and prompted him to hope even against hope. He recalls the mighty signs and wonders by which God had wrought the deliverance of his people in times past:—he acknowledges the Omnipotence of God, as manifested in the creation and preservation of all things:—and while he wonders at the forbearance of the Almighty's right hand, in not consuming the enemy as in a moment—(such is the impatience of human nature)—he calls upon God to remember the dishonour offered to Himself by the foolish

people, who were blaspheming his Holy Name. But all the Psalmist's expressions of the natural thoughts of his heart are wafted towards the Mercy-seat in a cloud of incense—the fragrance of the prayer of faith—that cloud which the All-merciful forbears to examine, for the discovery of our secret sins and infirmities. For He is not extreme to mark what is amiss in us, while we venture to approach Him in the spirit of prayer and penitence. David pleads the faithfulness of God's covenant; and therein, brethren, is *our* only refuge. The Covenant of Mercy and Grace in Christ Jesus is on the part of our Heavenly Father a voluntary act, like his previous covenants with the seed of Adam. They were all the free engagements of God with his creatures, though they were not given without conditions to be fulfilled on our part—faith and obedience—our deficiency in the works of the law being made up by the perfect obedience of His Son our Saviour, and by his atonement for our actual transgressions—but with this warning, that without faith it is impossible to please God. Wherefore we find it recorded in Holy Writ, that notwithstanding his many infirmities, his many backslidings, his many presumptuous sins against the written Law,—David is called the man after God's own heart. And his title to this high distinction is obviously made out through the entire pages of that noble book of devotion, which he was inspired to pen for the instruction of the children of Sion; and which has been preserved for our learning: for herein we have an epitome of the entire scope and purpose of the sacred volume—matter for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God, that is the true Christian, may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Such was David; for though a monarch, he was humble before his God; though a sinful man, the prayer of faith was ever ascending from his heart; though a self-convicted perpetrator of many heinous offences against the Law of God, under the reproaches of his own conscience he could bow at the

footstool of Divine Mercy; not only in the confidence of personal pardon, but as an intercessor for the suffering Church and People of God, against their enemies and blasphemers. David does not here imprecate the vengeance of Heaven upon their heads, but merely calls upon God to defend his own chosen people; the faithful who are suffering from their loyalty to the Ruler of the whole earth: them who remain true to his own cause; and whose lives and liberty are exposed to the malicious presumption of their foes. Such was also the experience of our blessed Lord and his disciples at the hands of another generation—a faithless and stubborn generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit cleaved not stedfastly unto God. But these things were ordained of old, from everlasting; and in the eternal counsels of Jehovah it was decreed, that the salvation of the whole human race should be wrought out only by much tribulation; that even the Holy Jesus, in his human character, should be made perfect through suffering; and that none of his faithful followers, to the end of the world, should escape the temporal penalty of their inherited guilt. Yet is the pious Psalmist justified in calling upon God to maintain his own cause; and is unto us, so far, a pattern of righteousness: for in him, my brethren, we have the encouragement of a bright, though imperfect, because human example; and if we have grace imparted to us to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the sacred truths which are perpetuated in the Book of Psalms; we may aspire to that holier and more perfect pattern of righteousness, which is set before us in the Person and in the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XXIX.

PSALM 75.

This Psalm takes the form of a dialogue, consisting of three parts, opening and concluding with vows of devotedness to the service of God, by the sacred writer himself, on behalf of the Church and People of Israel; the intermediate portion being uttered in the Name of the Almighty, declaring his own power and majesty, and his unalterable judgments in the government of the universe.

Ver. 1—3. In this address to the great Jehovah, the Psalmist speaks in the name of all Israel, and afterwards in his own name as their temporal ruler and judge. The entire Bible history of the people who descended from Abraham is certainly a wondrous record of guidance, protection, and deliverances; such as could have been wrought only by Omnipotence. But it is at the same time an evidence of surpassing love towards a people, in whom the rebellious spirit of that corruption which had tainted our common nature at the fall, appears more conspicuously than in any other distinct race of mankind; and still more forcibly, when we reflect upon the evident manifestations of divine power, wrought especially and solely in their behalf. We have only a brief account of the general depravity which prevailed in the days of Noah; and that God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And, moreover, in all the genealogy of the Patriarchs from Adam unto Noah, we read of only one besides the latter, of whom we can suppose that he was engaged (and that is a mere supposition) in endeavouring to stem the torrent of iniquity which then overran the earth. That patriarch was Enoch, of whom it is merely recorded that he walked with God, and was

not: for God took him. Of Noah, St. Peter speaks as a preacher of righteousness; and in his history we read that he found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Yet we know, that although there is no record of an established priesthood in those days; or of any strong manifestation of a Divine Ruler over all; or of any other means employed to bring the people out of darkness into light: the Almighty nevertheless resolved to cleanse the earth of its moral filth, by one fell swoop of his righteous indignation; reserving only a single family to repair the breaches made by his own creatures in the beautiful fabric of creation; and to lay the foundation of that final dispensation of Divine Mercy, when Elias should come, and restore all things. This, my brethren, is no historical digression: no departure from the immediate subject. It is brought forward in contrast with the merciful forbearance of the Almighty towards the seed of that chosen Patriarch, to whom He had promised that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed.—We are partakers of that universal blessing, and in a much greater degree than the immediate descendants of Abraham. But they are the subjects of our present reflections. The Psalmist, looking back upon the experience of his own people, offers the vow of thanksgiving in their name—Unto Thee do *we* give thanks: because the wondrous works Thou hast wrought in our behalf declare that Thou art ever present with us. In the midst of thy people Israel, thy Name is ever heard in grateful adoration! And to manifest his own faithfulness, the Psalmist vows in his own name, that his influence shall not be wanting to keep alive in the hearts of his people a sense of their obligation to a strict obedience, that they may walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless:—When I receive the congregation, I shall judge according unto right.

Ver. 4—10. In this portion of the Psalm, as I have already stated, the Lord Jehovah Himself is introduced as the speaker,

proclaiming his own majesty and authority over the earth and all the inhabitants thereof; sustaining its firmness by the unseen exercise of his omnipotent will: and declaring in what manner he administers supreme justice among the foolish and stiff-necked children of corruption; namely, by warning and correction, administered in mercy, that they may not be driven into the remediless infatuation of provoking His final judgment. He instructs us to look alone towards His mercy-seat, for all things that are desirable in this our state of probation, by shewing that from Himself cometh every good and every perfect gift; that our advancement in strength, in virtue, in success—or, as the Psalmist's expression is, our promotion—is not to be looked for in any of those objects of sense, upon which we are by nature prone to place our reliance, from whatever point of this world's treasury we may expect or hope to derive them; but only from Himself, the Creator, the Ruler, the Disposer of all things. And why? God is the Judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another. His dispensations are all from his own fulness; and in the orderings of his Providence He exalteth the humble and meek: He filleth the hungry with good things, and the rich He sendeth empty away. In his hand is the cup of his own bounteousness, overflowing with good for all his creatures; but it is full mixed: and as He poureth out of the same, there is blessing to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality; but tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil. These are the dregs of the wine-cup of his just judgments, which the ungodly of the earth shall drink and suck out. This figurative language is finely illustrated in the 21st chapter of the book of Job: Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? What, say they, is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him? Yet, how oft is the candle of the wicked put out! and how oft cometh their

destruction upon them! God distributeth sorrows in his anger. The wicked are reserved to the day of destruction: they shall be brought forth in the day of wrath! In the two concluding verses of this Psalm, there is the warm response of a heart fully devoted to the promotion of God's glory upon earth; and taking up the language ascribed to the Almighty in the preceding portion, pledging itself to the fulfilment of the divine will, in humble imitation of the Divine Example. [Read *v.* 11, 12.]

PSALM 76.

This is a hymn of thanksgiving, generally supposed to have been written to commemorate the signal instance of God's interposition on behalf of Israel, in the days of Hezekiah; when the invading army of the Assyrians was cut off by the avenging angel, and the beloved Zion delivered from its threatened destruction.

Ver. 1—4. The name Jewry is here used for Judea, as Salem is for Jerusalem, the holy city, the name which it bore in the days of Melchisedech its king, signifying Peace, as Jerusalem does the Vision or Possession of Peace. Well may the poetic mind of the Psalmist exult in the manifest presence of the Almighty among his people Israel, when the prayer of their pious king Hezekiah had been so miraculously responded to, in the destruction, in one night, of a hundred and four score and five thousand of their boasting invaders. Well may he affirm that in Judea was God known, and his name magnified among the people! For on this occasion there was no demonstration of physical power manifest—no dividing and returning of the waters—no protecting pillar or cloud—no disturbance of the order of nature, to effect the purposes of the divine will. While the worship of God was proceeding in his Tabernacle, the place wherein his honour then dwelt—while the king, as we read in the 37th chapter of Isaiah, was mourning over the insolent letter of Senacherib, and had spread it before the Lord, and was praying to the Lord; lo! beneath the blasting of the breath

of His displeasure, the arrows of Zion's enemies had fallen from their grasp ; the shield, the sword, and the battle, were no more to be seen in array against the armies of the God of Israel : his arm, upraised in their behalf, had more might than those of the thousands of robbers, slumbering in fancied security among the polluted hills of Judea : for in the silence of the night the angel of the Lord had gone forth into the camp of the Assyrians ; and the morning broke forth, only to reveal to their ambitious ruler his prostrate army of lifeless warriors—

Jehovah had triumph'd—his people were free !

Ver. 5—10. These verses are but a continuation of the thankful meditations of the inspired penman, mingling his expressions of exultation, astonishment, and fear ; and acknowledging that it is in the power of the Almighty to turn even the fierceness of man to his own glory in the sight of his people, by abating the pride of their enemies, assuaging their malice, and confounding their devices ; yea, even by consuming them as in a moment !

Ver. 11, 12. The Psalmist therefore calls upon the people to be constant in the offering of their vows to the Lord of Heaven and Earth, and to be faithful in their fulfilment of them : as well as in godly fear and reverence to bring those oblations to his holy Temple, which formed so important a feature in the ritual of the Jewish worship. In this matter, the descendants of Abraham left an example to the professed disciples of Christ, worthy of our imitation. We have our stated seasons, wherein, as we are taught by our Church, we implore the Almighty and ever-living God to bless the whole state of Christ's Church, militant here on earth ; humbly beseeching him to accept our alms and oblations, which we offer in His Name, on behalf of the poor and needy among our Christian brethren : but the meagreness of these offerings gives to them the appearance of a merely formal act—a bare acknowledgment of our Lord's

authority in inculcating the virtue of charity, and the blessings that are awarded to it: upon which the great Apostle has so finely enlarged, by shewing that among the most prominent of all the Christian graces, faith, hope, and charity; the greatest, the foremost, the most essential, as the visible fruit of a true faith, is Charity. I say not, that the Jewish offerings were directed to this end, the relief of their poorer brethren: they were devoted to the enriching of the treasury of the Temple, and were amply shared by the Priesthood themselves: for the Temple, and the altar, and the priest, needed the sustenance of human help. But these oblations were made to the glory of God, and in obedience to his direct commands. And as such were the more acceptable to Him, if given as a grateful acknowledgment of miraculous deliverance from the power of heathen people and princes, whose spirit He alone could restrain; thus proving himself wonderful among the kings of the earth.

PSALM 77.

The writer of this Psalm is understood as bemoaning the severity and length of some period of captivity, under which the people of God were then suffering; and of which he himself had personal experience. There are in this plaintive composition mingled expressions of fear and faith, such as may equally escape the lips of a Christian, in the season of affliction; and it is therefore an exceedingly appropriate subject for contemplation in his hour of distress.

Ver. 1—4. Here is a strong testimony in favour of the efficacy of prayer in the time of trouble. It is worse than useless—it is a mockery of God, to offer the mere form of prayer from feigned lips. If we feel not that the issues of our experience, whether of adversity or prosperity, whether of sorrow or joy, are in the hands of our Heavenly Father, to be dispensed through the merciful mediation of our Redeemer, the lifeless oblations of the tongue will avail us nothing. The prayer of faith is alone acceptable to Him who knoweth the thoughts and

intents of the heart. Such was the prayer of the Psalmist—I will cry unto God, and He shall hearken unto me. I have sought the Lord in the time of my trouble, when my soul refused every earthly comfort; when my heart was vexed; when for very weariness of complaining, mine eyes were wakeful throughout the season of sleep; when I became so feeble that I could not speak. But, on deep reflection upon my past experience of divine mercies, I have resolved to cast all my cares upon Thee—I will cry unto Thee, and thou shalt hearken unto me.

Ver. 5—9. In these verses the Psalmist relates the progress of his meditations, and the course which his thoughts took while considering his experience in the days of old, and the years that were past. He remembered some seasons of joyfulness, when he could give utterance to his feelings in voluntary strains of mirth, and sing unto God with the voice of melody. Now he finds it needful, in the silent hours of night, to commune with his own heart, to examine his thoughts, whether he is acting faithfully and submissively towards God, in the indulgence of a desponding spirit: catechising himself by questions addressed to his own reasoning faculties. Because I am now smarting under the rod of God's displeasure, am I therefore to charge Him with unfaithfulness to his own promises? Will He be no more entreated—is his mercy gone for ever—is his promise come utterly to an end—hath He forgotten to be gracious—will his loving-kindness be blotted out for ever, by the torrent of his displeasure? The faith of a believing spirit needs only to be tried by the touchstone of rational argument, to be restored to its native vigour and activity.

Ver. 10—20. In how few words is expressed the simple operation, by which the mind of the pious complainant was brought back to refresh itself, as it were, at the fountain of hope! I said, it is mine own infirmity! Through how many years have I been preserved to witness and to enjoy the bless-

ings wrought for his people, by the right hand of the Most Highest! And if I look back to the old time, whose events have been handed down in remembrance from father to son, from one generation to another; and embalmed in the written records of inspired men of the ages past; I must remember thy works, O Lord, and call to mind thy wonders: they shall be the subject of my meditations, the theme of all my discourse. For thy way is holy: therefore hast Thou made known thy power among the people, that they may rejoice and trust in Thee. How often hast Thou wrought the deliverance of thy favoured people, even the faithful seed of Jacob and of Joseph! How many were the miracles performed in their sight, to protect them from the malice of the destroyer, and to preserve them for the work whereunto they were appointed! How did the insensate elements obey thine irresistible will, as instruments of thy love towards Israel, and of thy judgments upon her enemies! A just sense of the Omnipotence and Omnipresence of God cannot stop short of unlimited confidence in his Goodness. It is true that his mercy is over *all* his works: but the Lord Jehovah hath Himself declared, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. It is therefore to those who seek it by penitence and prayer, and deeds of righteousness, that faith, which is the gift of God, displays to their minds, as it were on a map, the barrenness of our inherited nature; the thorns and briars that spring up on its surface, choking the growth of the good seed with which the Spirit of God is ever labouring to enrich it. The believer, in his moments of faithlessness and despondency, looking around and within himself, is driven at last to confess, It is mine own infirmity! For, directing his thoughts onward and upward, he still sees, and is constrained to confess, that as in the earliest ages of our being the Lord Jehovah led his people like sheep, by the hand of Moses and Aaron; He still proveth us, and trieth us, like as silver is tried; holding our soul in life, and suffering not our feet to slip. Be

it then, my brethren, our endeavour, as it is our duty, to learn his will, that we may do it. The revelation of that will is given us for our own good: for as it is well reasoned by Elihu the friend of Job, If thou sinnest, what doest thou against God? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto Him! If thou be righteous, what givest thou Him, or what receiveth He of thine hand? And why? God is the Judge: in his hand there is the cup of our deservings and of our destiny: it is full mixed: and He poureth out of the same, giving unto every man according as his work shall be.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XXX.

PSALM 78.

By the earlier authorities, this Psalm is supposed to have been written by an inspired musician, Asaph, who had been a celebrated chorister of the Temple in the days of David. In the Hebrew it is called *Maskil*, i. e. a didactic or instructive poem. Long as it is, it can only be treated in these Lectures as a text to one continuous discourse; and, perhaps, in order to secure a greater attention to the Psalm itself, it will be more advantageously read after the Commentary than before it: for to either of them the first verse is an appropriate introduction:—Hear my law, O my people: incline your ears unto the words of my mouth.

Ver. 1—73. Twice, in the Epistle to the Romans, does St. Paul speak of the gospel of which he was only a preacher, as “my Gospel.” The writer of this Psalm also uses the same liberty of expression—Hear *my* law, O my people! Each of these wise instructors speaks, therefore, only as one having authority. The subject, in either case, entitles the speaker to attention. This Asaph calls the attention of the Israelites to such facts in the history of God’s dealings with his people, as had been handed down to them by their fathers of old time; he therefore speaks of those facts as parables, as hard sentences of old; but which are of equal importance to the children of the existing generation as to their forefather, if received and taken by them as lessons of wisdom. For the God of Israel had established a testimony of Himself, and ordained a law for his people, which He designed equally for the guidance and government of succeeding generations; that it might prove to them the exemplar of piety, and the rule of their conduct in the world; and that afterwards their children and children’s children might know it, and learn therefrom to set their hope in God, to remember his works, and to keep his commandments; while we Christians are reminded, under the

newer Covenant of Grace, is the whole duty of man. Herein, too, they are exhorted by the sacred writer not to follow in the steps of their fathers, who were, as their whole history proves, a refractory contumacious generation. Ephraim's tribe is merely referred to figuratively, as representing the whole people, they being a very numerous tribe, and therefore exercising a proportionate influence in the entire body corporate: such is the proneness of our nature to follow a multitude to do evil. The people of Israel in times past had not kept the covenant of their God; they had refused to walk in his laws; they forgot the wonderful works that He had wrought in their behalf, and in their very sight. Here the Psalmist goes into an enumeration of those wonders, to impress them more strongly on the minds of the existing generation; reminding them of the divine anger against his thankless and rebellious children; which he describes as having burst out as a destructive fire upon the dwellings of Jacob, and spreading itself throughout Israel. These constant acts of rebellion against the Most High God would seem perfectly incredible to us, if they were not fully confirmed in the historical pages of Holy Writ; and presented with still greater force, when brought together into a brief space, in this and others of the Psalms. But, brethren, if we honestly judge ourselves, and examine the character of our own dispositions and desires, in comparison with the known law of God, there is no passing period of our life in which we may not anticipate some token of divine wrath, if He were extreme to mark what is done amiss. The Israelites, however, had experienced the continued forbearance of the Almighty, and his loving-kindness towards them, even in the midst of all their murmuring and faithlessness; and had revolted again and again, under the miraculous supply of all the wants common to nature; which wants were increased to so great an extent during their march through the barren wilderness, where was neither water nor food, but such as was supplied by the immediate ever-present bounty of God.

Yet they believed Him not, nor put their trust in Him. They defied his anger in the most presumptuous language:—Shall God prepare a table in the wilderness? He smote the stony rock indeed, that the water gushed out, and the streams flowed withal: but can He give bread also, or provide flesh for his people? And what was the practical reply of inexhaustible love and boundless mercy to these impious provocations? The doors of heaven were opened; they poured forth abundance of all things that could minister to the gratification of their unrestrained desires: but these gifts brought not with them the grace of thankfulness; they did eat angels' food, but with the unsatiated appetite of devils: they required meat for their lust: and this obtained, it tempted them to excess of indulgence; and then followed disease and death: for while the meat was yet in their mouths, the heavy wrath of God came upon them, and slew the wealthiest of them; yea, and smote down the chosen men that were in Israel; or, as the historian relates it, the wrath of the Lord smote them with a very great plague, and the place where they were buried was called Kibroth-hattaavah, or the graves of lust. Yet was not this judgment sufficient to restrain the survivors from sinning yet more and more; for they were blind to the visible hand of the Lord in all these wonders of mercy and of correction; and continued in their course of murmuring, and rebellion, and impenitency, until, at the end of the forty years of their wandering in the wilderness, not one of the generation who had escaped the Egyptian bondage, except Joshua and Caleb, survived to reach the promised land. This judgment cannot be a subject of wonder; for as the Psalmist relates, that when they found themselves wasting away under the divine anger, they sought the Lord, and turned, and enquired after God, remembering that He was their strength and their Redeemer; yet that this was but the mockery of the lips; their hearts were far from Him; they did but flatter and dissemble; and still remained unfaithful to his covenant. Nevertheless,

the promise of God to preserve the seed of faithful Abraham was sure and stedfast; and for his mercy and for his truth's sake, He forgave their misdeeds, and destroyed them not, turning away his wrath, and not suffering his whole displeasure to arise: for He considered they were but flesh; and that they were even a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again. Yet was all this forbearance thrown away upon a thankless generation, whose wilful forgetfulness of unceasing and marvellous deliverances appears more like a miracle of satanic power, than the effect of mere human weakness, or human depravity. We can hardly bring ourselves to think so unfavourably of our own nature, as to believe it capable of such daring ingratitude, except under the influence of some tyranny which is irresistible: but it is not so: the will of man is free to refuse the evil and to choose the good, if he will seek wisdom and strength for his guidance, where only it is to be obtained. His servants we are to whom we obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness. And it must have been by a marvellously stubborn indulgence of their own will, that the Israelites were so infatuated to a resistance to the will of their God; made known to them as it had been by entreaty, by warning, by denunciations of wrath, by manifestations of uncontrolable power, whether in mercy or in judgment. For the Psalmist tells us they thought not of his many miracles in their favour, or of his many deliverances, though they had been the only people who had experienced them from the earliest period of their history. He very minutely recapitulates, through nine successive verses of this Psalm, the heavy visitations of God upon the Egyptians, while Pharaoh held the Israelites in continued bondage; but he says, they thought not of His hand, nor of the day when He delivered them. Yet perhaps the most extraordinary circumstance of their history is, that they had been forewarned of their rebellious character, and of the consequences that would follow upon their doings, so long back as the time

of Moses; when the dying Patriarch (*Deut.* xxxi, xxxii,) commanded the Levites to gather unto him all the elders of their tribes, and their officers, that he might speak in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them. For I know, said he, that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days: because ye *will* do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger, through the work of your hands. And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of the children of Israel. The Psalmist then proceeds to describe the mercies they had experienced after their deliverance from Egypt, when the Lord Jehovah led forth his people like sheep, and carried them in the wilderness like a flock; until He had safely established them within the borders of his Sanctuary. Yet was all this insufficient to win them to obedience; for, as the Psalmist describes them, they were still inconstant, unbelieving, and rebellious; turning their backs upon their God, falling away like their forefathers, and starting aside like a broken bow, i. e. like an arrow from a broken bow. They fell into the sin of idolatry. We, my brethren, who only hear of the marvellous events recorded for our instruction, may well ponder over the ingratitude and folly of a people, so favoured as were the Israelites, with visible and palpable manifestations of the Divine Presence and of divine protection; privileges unknown to any and every other people upon the earth. But they should lead us to self-examination. The children of Abraham were but the heirs of a temporal covenant—a mere type of that more gracious, more perfect, and enduring Covenant, into which it hath pleased the Almighty to enter with us; who are the descendants of a people, that until the coming of our Saviour, were left in a great measure to the imperfect light of our common and deeply-corrupted nature. Yet they, when they first heard of salvation by Jesus Christ, welcomed the gracious message, while the Jews did gainsay and

blaspheme: for when, as it is related in the Acts of the Apostles, Paul and Barnabas preached at Antioch, almost the whole city came together, to hear the Word of God; but the Jews were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, until the two Apostles waxing bold, told them, It was necessary the Word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set Thee (i. e. Christ) to be a Light to the Gentiles; that Thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the Word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed. And the Word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. From this memorable hour, we, my brethren, may date our conversion to Christianity, as a people; and it is no less remarkable by the way, that upon this occasion the Jews exhibited a fresh proof of their rebellious obstinacy. They resisted the Covenant of Grace, as their fathers had resisted the Covenant of Works—both being equally Covenants of Mercy. But the argument I would draw from this combined history, is by way of an appeal to the conscience of every one who hears me, whether he has not, in some greater or less degree, tempted and displeased the Most High God, by disregarding his testimonies; turning his back upon the divine laws; falling away like his forefathers; starting aside, like the arrow from a broken bow? If your heart be still the prey of unbelief, and your life that of indifference to the mighty signs and wonders wrought in your behalf, and to secure your eternal salvation, your sin is greater than that of the Israelites. They saw God only in his works; we have seen Him face to face; we have conversed with God manifest in the flesh; we have heard his gracious words from the lips of the incarnate and co-eternal Son, the express Image of Himself, reflecting all the

brightness of His Glory, and instructing us in lessons full of grace and truth. With us, old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new. The promises of the Gospel are not, like those of the Abrahamic covenant, bounded by the narrow circle of this life's duration. The Canaan of our hopes, the lot of our inheritance, lies beyond the grave—a passage pregnant with more horrors, than the Israelites could have dreaded from the swelling of Jordan. Yet are we put in possession of the whole armour of God, to protect us from every danger, to secure us from every foe, that may beset us in our pilgrimage. Wherefore the Apostle exhorts us to be firm and faithful; having our loins girt about with truth; and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace: and above all, taking the shield of faith, whereby we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. The possession of these is the evidence of our fidelity towards God: that is, of our belief in Him, our trust in Him, our love and fear of Him. Without them we cannot meet the last enemy, which is death; nor can we contemplate his approach without fear and trembling. With them we may, through the power of divine grace, working together with our own strength, and helping our infirmity, obtain the victory over this dreaded and mortal foe; triumphantly exulting in the very moments of our extremest weakness—O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Whereas we see in the history before us of the experience of ancient Israel, that God is not mocked, albeit his forbearance and long-suffering are manifested through long periods of his people's provocation. It was the sin of idolatry that roused the indignation of the Almighty: they grieved Him with their hill altars, and provoked Him to displeasure with their images, until He became wroth, and took sore displeasure at his people. And how did the Lord manifest his displeasure against them? By suffering the ark of the covenant to fall into the hands of the

Philistines in the day of battle; by withdrawing his protecting arm from the Israelites: by giving them over to the power of their enemies, after two murderous conflicts, in which 34,000 of the men of Israel were slaughtered, and many more became slaves and bondsmen to the heathen victors. All this is briefly described in the few successive verses of the Psalm we are now considering; and the immediate purpose of the writer is, to magnify, by the contrast, the faithfulness of God to his covenant with his chosen people. For as, in the first place, we learn from the history given in the first book of Samuel, that during the seven months through which the ark remained in the possession of the Philistines, the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them, and He destroyed them; until even they acknowledged the sovereignty of the God of Israel; and restored the ark, with a trespass-offering, that they might be healed, and that they might know why his hand was not removed from them: so, in the second place, we see the Psalmist, as if in a vision of inspiration, recording the sudden return of the yearnings of Divine Love towards the afflicted people of Israel:—So the Lord awakened as one out of sleep, and as a giant refreshed with wine; smiting his enemies, and putting them to a perpetual shame. But the end and purport of all this was, that the promise might be accomplished, that in the seed of Abraham all the families of the earth should be blessed; and that of the fruit of the loins of David, according to the flesh, God would raise up Christ to sit on his throne. To this point the Psalmist leads us, towards the conclusion of his instructive poem. He shews us how by the power and faithfulness of the Almighty, the remnant of his people were preserved; and the sacred ark of his covenant kept inviolate, even in heathen lands, until by his providential care it should be established in safety where He had provided its resting-place; even on the hill of Zion, which He loved. This brings us down to the time of David, whom the inspired writer of

this Psalm memorializes with an affectionate and reverential feeling, such as could have been prompted only by a deep knowledge of the character of the just and pious ruler of Israel; and of the marvellous evidences shewn throughout the life of David, that he was the chosen of God, to feed his people with a faithful and true heart, and to rule them prudently with all his power.* [Read the Psalm.]

Glory be to the Father, &c.

* See Note, p. 221.

LECTURE XXXI.

PSALM 79.

The writer of this mournful Ode is supposed to have been Asaph, and the subject of it the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchodonosor the king of Babylon, which happened in the time of the prophet Jeremiah, and to which many of the most pathetic passages in his writings apply. (*e. g.* viii, ix, x, &c.) At this time also commenced the seventy years of Israel's captivity. But this Psalm is expressive of deep repentance and sorrow and prayer, by the remnant of the people, after they had witnessed the desolation of the Temple and city of Jerusalem, as it is minutely recorded in the apocryphal book of Esdras (1 *Es.* i.) When the Lord spake unto the people, they made a sport of his prophets; so far forth that He being wroth with them for their great ungodliness, commanded the kings of the Chaldees to come up against them; who slew their young men with the sword, yea, even within the compass of their holy temple, and spared neither young man nor maid, old man nor child among them, for He delivered all into their hands. And they took all the holy vessels of the Lord, both great and small, with the vessels of the ark of God, and the king's treasures, and carried them away into Babylon. As for the house of the Lord, they burnt it; brake down the walls of Jerusalem, set fire upon her towers. As for her glorious things, they never ceased till they had consumed and brought them all to nought: and the people that were not slain with the sword, he carried into Babylon.

Ver. 1—3. All the histories which have been preserved for our instruction, having any connection with the prophecies of the old Seers, are so many proofs of their divine commission, and of the truth of that one memorable sentence uttered by the lips of Isaiah in the Name of the Most High:—My word that goeth forth out of my mouth shall not return unto Me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please. And most remarkable is the agreement of the event recorded in this Psalm with the prophecy of Jeremiah, in all its details:—At that time saith the Lord, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves: and they shall spread them

before the sun and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried: they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth! It would almost seem, from the deep lamentation of the sacred penman over this literal fulfilment of this awful prophecy, that the destruction of the holy Temple and of the city was an object of inferior consideration, as compared with the violation of the sanctuaries of the dead. And this is Nature. The deprivation of spiritual privileges is less keenly felt, than a violence offered to the merely sensitive faculties. The complaint, however, is but an introduction to the more lengthened exercise of penitence and prayer.

Ver. 4—7. Nevertheless, the present and personal feeling is here also uppermost. Shame and disgrace are hard to be borne; and when they must be sustained as the punishment of conscious guilt, the weight of the infliction is not diminished. Here they produce impatience, and something like a remonstrance against the divine justice:—Lord, how long wilt Thou be angry? Pour out thine indignation upon the heathen that have not known Thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy Name. They are far more deserving of thy displeasure: yet Thou permittest them to have the upper hand, and to triumph over thine own people: for they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place! But the Lord hath replied by his prophet:—Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the Lord. (*Jer. viii, 12.*)

Ver. 8—14. In this passage we have a pure sample of unmingled prayer, founded upon the consciousness of past sins, and upon the experience of great present misery. It is

finely said by our great poet, of the afflictions which our frail nature is doomed to bear, whether for punishment or in love,

They are the messengers
That feelingly persuade us what we are.

Nothing less than the experience of all those miseries, of which the Lord had so often forewarned them by his prophets, could subdue the rebellious heart of Israel. It was in their extremity only that they were sufficiently humbled to call upon the God of their salvation, to implore his mercies, to acknowledge his power over their heathen foes, and to trust in his arm for deliverance. Such was their present condition; and so helpless and prostrate were they in the sight of their triumphant foes, that they exulted in the apparent desertion of his people by Him, of whom they had so often boasted as exclusively the God of Israel—Where is now their God? The Psalmist therefore now prays for the retribution of the divine vengeance upon those who had been the instruments of divine justice; intermingling a warm petition on behalf of his captive countrymen, and appealing to the sufficiency of divine power for the deliverance of even those that were appointed to die. The conclusion is a vow of faithfulness and grateful adoration, by which the people are pledged to be always shewing forth the praise of their God from generation to generation.

P S A L M 80.

It is probable that this Psalm was written upon the same occasion as the preceding one, but by some person then in actual captivity; it is an elegant composition, illustrated by many highly poetical comparisons. With slight variations, one verse is given three times, as the burthen of the sacred ode. The most striking metaphor in it is, that which is literally explained by the prophet Isaiah. The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the House of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant.

Ver. 1—3. This fine invocation of the God of Israel, under the character of their Shepherd, indicates that the Psalm was written during the Babylonian captivity, by its reference to

that of Egypt, the subject of which were the generations that so soon followed after the administration of the affairs of that country by Joseph; for it was about seventy years after his death, that there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. (*Exod.* i.) Israel's wonderful deliverance from that bondage inspires the Psalmist's hope and prayer, that God will again interpose in their behalf, and rescue them from their captivity in Babylon. And he invokes Jehovah in the names of the three tribes which are stated in the Book of Numbers to have had the post of honour assigned to them, in guarding the Tabernacle of the Congregation through the wilderness of Sinai, which was ordered in the second year after the Israelites were come out of the land of Egypt. The total number of these three tribes alone, Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasses, was a hundred and eight thousand one hundred men. The burthen or chorus of this sacred poem is a fervent prayer for the restoration of Israel by that merciful dispensation which had conducted their forefathers from the land of Egypt, namely, by the manifestation of the light of God's countenance.

Ver. 4—7. This passage is merely a lamentation over their present sufferings, but it is couched in language which makes it painfully descriptive. A state of slavery must be a state of unmitigated anguish, and from its very nature, more devoid of hope than any other condition: and it must be supposed, that in the brief periods allowed to the captive for the refreshment of nature by food, his reflections will return in their fullest force; his busy memory will spread before him the "dissolving views" of home and freedom and happiness; until his fast-flowing tears obliterate even those shadows

Of joys departed, never to return!

How beautifully concise and expressive, then, is the Psalmist's metaphor:—Thou feedest them with the bread of tears, and givest them plenteousness of tears to drink! There were other

reflections also, to embitter the pangs of captivity. Their beloved country was a subject of derision to their foes; they laughed it to scorn. "Israel when forsaken by her God, was a prey for which all the neighbouring nations contended; it was a very bone of contention among her neighbours, *who* should divide her spoils, while exulting over her, and scoffing at that condition to which her own iniquities had reduced her."* There was then no help for her but in the mercy of her God, whom she therefore implores to renew the exercise of his healing powers in her behalf, that once more she may be made whole.

Ver. 8—16. Our Saviour's beautiful parable of the vineyard and the husbandmen is the best commentary on this metaphorical description of the Church of Israel, as at this time suffering the penalties of her rebellion against the Lord of the vineyard. The Psalmist looks back with grateful pride to the day when the Lord made his Covenant with Abraham, whereby his seed should become a chosen people; and he refers to the manifest fulfilment of that Covenant, in the fact of Israel's wonderful deliverance out of Egypt. She is the vine whom Jehovah had brought from thence, and casting out before her the heathen who had possessed the land which He had appointed for his own vineyard, He planted her therein, giving her abundance of room and other auxiliaries to grow and flourish. Under his protecting care she took deep root, and filled the land, her verdure equalled that of the goodly cedar trees, until the hills were covered with the shadow of it. Why then is this reverse? for now her fences are broken down, the beasts of the field gorge themselves with her delicious fruit; and the more savage natures riot in her destruction; they tear her roots from the ground. Alas, for the cause of this desertion we must consult our Lord's parable. Jehovah looked to his people for the fruits of righteousness; and when the time of the fruit drew near, when the gracious God of Israel had a right to demand some return for the loving-kindness He had shewn to his people. He sent his

* Bp. Horne.

servants unto the husbandmen that they might receive the fruits: and the husbandmen took his servants, and beat, and stoned them, and killed them. Thus did the idolatrous Israelites to the faithful prophets of the Lord: and for this cause was the place of the vineyard burnt with fire, and the branch He had made so strong for Himself, cut down in his indignation, until it perished at the rebuke of his countenance.

Ver. 17—19. The leading verse here evidently possesses some mystic meaning; for though it may apply to the Israelites, who are not infrequently spoken of as one person, yet the terms used seem to have exclusively a respect to the Messiah, whom God had chosen to be the Leader and Redeemer of his people. And in this sense it is clearly a prophetic passage, to the fulfilment of which the Psalmist looks forward as the only security for the permanent well-being of Israel:—And so (when this is accomplished) we will not go back from Thee: O let us live, and we shall call upon thy Name!

PSALM 81.

The Feast of Trumpets, an ordinance of the Levitical ministration, remained in the days of David, when this Psalm was composed by Asaph for the use of the people in the commemoration of this ordinance; though somewhat about 400 years after its institution, as recorded in the book of Leviticus:—In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. At this period the Jewish Church also commemorated the creation of the world; and it was at the same time a season of thanksgiving for the gathering in of the harvest; upon which subject there remains in the book of Leviticus (c. xxii) a precept of perpetual obligation:—When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor and to the stranger. I am the Lord your God. The Feast of Trumpets was one of the most joyous festivals of the Jewish year, while it was a religious solemnity, observed in obedience to the divine command.

Ver. 1—5. The jubilant language of this first verse sounds in our ears as if less appropriate to any religious service, than to occasions of secular rejoicing. But the God of Heaven, in order to establish his dominion in the hearts of every future generation, was more familiar with his first chosen people than

with any other family of the earth. This encouraged a familiarity on their part, which we see exemplified nowhere so frequently as in the language of the Psalms, though they are the productions of various writers. And, as in the economy of the Jewish worship, melody was the chief medium (allowed if not divinely appointed) of the people's adoration; the language of their praises must necessarily partake of the character of its harmonious accompaniments. Upon the great religious anniversary for which this Psalm was composed, the terms in which the national joy is expressed are therefore most appropriate—Sing we merrily unto God our strength: make a cheerful noise unto the God of Jacob! And it is here pleaded as a privilege conferred by a statute made for Israel, a law of the God of Jacob; which was ordained in Joseph, that is, for the tribes who followed Joseph out of Egypt, and were afterwards established in the land of Canaan. And in what follows, the sacred poet reminds the people, as though God did beseech them to be mindful, of the deliverance their forefathers had experienced, of their provocations, of the divine forbearance and loving-kindness, and of the still compassionate tenderness of God towards them.

Ver. 6—17. Here is a remarkable contrast to the matter and the character of the preceding verses. The Lord Jehovah is suddenly introduced as recalling to the congregation his own dealings with the people of old, and thereby exciting and encouraging the then present generation in the expression of their grateful joy. Yet the picture of the past is not calculated to produce an unmingled feeling of pleasure, such as may be supposed to be the purpose of the great festival; though the manifestation of the divine favour, now awarded to Israel, may have predominated over every feeling of regret for the past sins and sufferings of her people. It is for their instruction and correction, however, that the Lord now recapitulates the past experience and the past provocations of the house of Jacob. He reminds them that He alone delivered them from the bur-

thens of the Egyptian bondage ; that when they were in trouble, and called upon Him, what time they were surrounded by the storms and tempests that fell upon the land of Egypt, He heard them, and protected them ; that when they murmured against the Lord and against Moses in Replidim, saying, Is the Lord with us or not ? He proved them, that is, corrected them at Horeb, by the miraculous supply of water ; that He gently expostulated with them on their still cleaving to that love of idol worship which they had imbibed from their Egyptian masters ; promising that if they would hearken unto Him who had shewed them so great wonders in Egypt, and in their passage through the wilderness, there should no spiritual evil befall them, no strange God should dwell among them. But, alas, the people would not hear ; Israel would not obey their gracious Preserver. So I (saith the Lord) I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, and let them follow their own imaginations. Jehovah is then represented as lamenting over their obstinacy, and proclaiming what He would have done for them, had they hearkened unto Him, and walked in his ways. The joyfulness of the sacred jubilee for which this Psalm was composed could not, then, have been better promoted, than by enabling the assembled multitudes to contrast their own present state of peace and safety with the perils of their forefathers ; and by renewing in their hearts the conscious assurance, that the Lord God of Israel from the days of their father Abraham was still their God, and for ever and ever, while they should prove faithful to his covenant, and strive to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. For then would they hallow his sabbaths ; then would they go their way into his gates with thanksgiving, and enter his courts with praise : singing merrily unto God their strength, and making a cheerful noise unto the God of Jacob.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XXXII.

PSALM 82.

The Psalmist, as a faithful minister of the Truth, here reproveth the wrong doings of those who are put in authority, even the Judges and Magistrates of the land, who give wrong judgment, and from secret motives favour the ungodly, and disregard the plea of the poor righteous man. He reminds them that however exalted in this life, they shall die like common men, and that the divine judgment will thereafter be passed as well upon their public actions as upon their secret motives.

Ver. 1—4. It is recorded in St. John's Gospel, that our Saviour himself, referred the unbelieving Jews to this very Psalm, when they would have stoned Him for proclaiming Himself the Son of God. This He did to shew them, that even by their own prophet and king they were called gods, as being the children of the Most Highest. In this sense it is that the Psalmist applies the term gods to the rulers among men. But he reminds them that the God of Heaven and Earth standeth in their courts, and is still the supreme Judge over all. He reproaches them, therefore, for their unjust dealings in their high office, and shews them the proper objects of their care and protection—the poor and the fatherless, the outcast and the needy—that their cause may be impartially judged, and themselves be delivered from the oppression of the ungodly. Under the Jewish dispensation of civil justice, this reproof might have been more needed than in our Christian land; but the greater therefore is the sin of our rulers and administrators of law and justice, if they act in their high and sacred offices with favour or partiality; since in the Gospel which they have been taught, the Law of God is more fully and plainly revealed than in the Old Testament.

Ver. 5—8. The latter part of the 5th verse is figurative—it speaks of those who are placed by God's Providence in command or authority over others, whether in the administration of justice or otherwise, as the foundations of the social system; and the sacred penman complains that they are out of course; that the judges do not understand their own responsibility to a higher tribunal than that at which they preside; that they are unlearned and in darkness, following their own will in the use of the authority committed to them; and manifesting a total forgetfulness, if not ignorance, that though they are thus placed as gods, ruling over the temporal destinies of their fellow-men, there is a judgment awaiting them after death. And in the fervour of his meditation on this subject, the Psalmist calls on God to arise, and administer his own perfect justice on the whole earth; that the benighted heathen, as well as the unfaithful Israelite, may know and confess that there is a supreme Ruler over all; who will defend the right in behalf of all who are oppressed and who are afflicted under the dominion of our great spiritual enemy, whose most powerful instruments of evil are the unjust judges and rulers of any people.

PSALM 83.

Here is a most fervid appeal on behalf of the Church of God, called forth by the continued enmity of heathen foes, who are combined together for her overthrow; and for the recovery of that savage liberty which allows the indulgence of all the evil passions of our nature, in the ignorance or habitual forgetfulness of a Supreme Lawgiver. But the Psalmist, in his zeal for the welfare of Zion, imprecates the righteous judgments of God upon the enemies of his Church; though not without the prayer that their punishment may be made the means of bringing them to a knowledge of the Most High.

Ver. 1—5. In the opening verse of this portion of the Psalm, David manifests a laudable impatience of the secret and open counsels and threats of Israel's foes; calling upon his God to shew Himself the protector of his people; no longer to

refrain from scourging their enemies with the rod of his power; to abate their pride, to assuage their malice, and to confound their devices: for that they are with one consent confederate against his chosen inheritance; murmuring, slandering, devising evil things, taking counsel together how to enact them, and openly threatening to root out their nation and their very name. From such foes, however, the Christian Church is no more exempt than was the ancient Sion. Her welfare also depends, under God, upon the prayerful fidelity of her ministers and her people.

Vers. 6—8 Here is an enumeration of Israel's foes, which cannot but bring to mind, among the reflecting members of Christ's Holy Catholic Church, the innumerable sects or denominations of those who, calling themselves Christians, are continually plotting and devising how best they may assault the bulwarks of our Sion, and disturb her peace, and diminish her usefulness. By an error on the side of charity, these have been suffered to multiply their tabernacles throughout the land; until, however discordant with each other their creeds and their unauthorized ministrations, they have become together a fearful body of boasting enemies. Their war-cry is liberty of conscience; while they *enjoy* it, (if it can be so said,) to an extent which has made it dangerous to their own souls. For it is in the nature of man, that the more he possesses of any imaginary good, he will crave the more. It does not suffice them that they are permitted to cover every nook and corner of the land with their unsightly tabernacles; but no sooner are the walls completed than they become masked batteries, from which to pour their small shot against the indestructible walls of God's sacred temples: thus exposing the *quality* of the liberty for which they contend, and continuing a proof of the truth of the poet Milton's assertion, made 200 years ago—

License they mean, when they cry, Liberty!

It is in the influence which the leaders of schism acquire

over the minds of the ignorant and unstable Christian, that they work their greatest power of evil: they imagine craftily against the *people*; that is, the great body of every community; for this is always and of necessity composed of those, who for want of due instruction, and for want of the leisure which is necessary to attain it, fall an easier prey to the devices of Satan; whose ministering spirits are the promoters of religious discord among the members of Christ's visible Church, which is his Body. Satan himself would have little chance among the children of men, were he in his own hideous person to become a preacher of liberty of conscience: but he has a numerous host of demure and sleek-haired emissaries, going to and fro in the earth, and seeking whom they may devour. Ye know very well, my brethren, that I have no worldly interest, no personal advantage to promote, in thus warning you against the delusions of schism: if I could reclaim every wandering sheep into the fold of my own flock, this would add not a single mite to my worldly possessions; it would not procure me one additional honour in the eyes of my fellow-men. Some of you may peradventure think me harsh and uncharitable, in what I have now and frequently said of the promoters of a *system* which I equally dread and abhor: but hear now what is the imprecation of the pious David upon those who were the disturbers of the peace and unity of the Church in his day:—

Ver. 9—18. Now, brethren, these are passages which you can read and ponder over daily; and if you can bring your minds seriously to reflect upon the sin against which these awful judgments were prayed for by the man after God's own heart, you will think more favourably perhaps of my earnest but honest condemnation of all schism. For remember, it was not against the heathen armies who were incessantly beleaguering the holy Jerusalem for mere temporal dominion; but against the spiritual foes of Sion, that David thus called for the divine interposition and vengeance. It was against them who

were combining and plotting for the overthrow of the established religion of God's chosen people. And surely we, who are the heirs of a better and holier Covenant, ought not to be lukewarm in the defence and preservation of our high privileges! And who are the invaders of these, but the will-worshippers of schism? they who say, I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas; yet each claiming a superiority over his brother schismatic, by proclaiming, *I am of Christ!* But this is the great Apostle's denunciation against them all—Whereas there is among you envyings and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal? For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body; whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free! After all his severe denunciations, the Psalmist does not however forget the sacred duty of praying for the spiritual enlightenment of the enemies of the Church: for he concludes this Psalm with an implied hope, that the punishment which he has invoked upon their heads may be made to them the means of grace; that they may thus be constrained to feel and acknowledge that the Lord Jehovah is God over all, blessed for evermore; and that He only is Most Highest over all the earth.

PSALM 84.

On all subjects of a melancholy character the Psalmist exercises that high gift which distinguishes him as the sweet singer of Israel. In some languages the prophet and the poet are designated by the same word: and this beautiful hymn displays the union of the two gifted characters. In a deep tone of serious meditation, David contemplates the beauty and superiority of the courts of the Lord's House over every scene of profane or idolatrous worship; yet in the true spirit of poetry, he points out that some of the least esteemed of God's creatures are there permitted to fulfil the destinies of their nature in peace, as being no less the objects of divine care than man himself. But he rejoices chiefly that the place where God's honour dwelleth is the sanctuary of the human soul; wherein it may find repose, and renew its strength, under all the trials and vicissitudes to which it is exposed in its pilgrimage through this vale of misery.

Ver. 1—3. No mind but that of the poet could have combined the ideas of sublimity and simplicity, as they are

brought together in these verses. The sacred penman breaks forth with an expression of his great delight in the beauty of holiness; and, as though at that time he himself were deprived of the privilege of worshipping in the Temple, he expresses his ardent desire and longing to enter therein; because whatever other privations he was then doomed to bear, his heart and his flesh rejoiced only in the Living God. And while his thoughts were thus mournfully occupied in surveying his own deprivation of spiritual liberty, he naturally compares it, or rather contrasts it, with that freedom which is enjoyed by those almost unregarded atoms of the creation, to whom is given the permission, as it were to tenants in fee, to occupy the lovely dwellings of the Lord of Hosts; there to build their nests, and there to lay their young. Or it may be that, as the good king of Israel always identifies himself with his people, weeping in their sorrows and rejoicing in their prosperity, he is here, in the name of those who were then in captivity, using a poet's license to express their longings once more to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to worship in his holy Temple.

Ver. 4—7. It is impossible, my brethren, for any but those who feel the blessedness of heart religion, to form a right conception of it: and I doubt if they who possess it could convey to others a perfect understanding of their own perpetual experience of the strong but quiet current of happy confidence, in which they find refreshment and sustenance to their souls. The Psalmist, however, gives us as faithful a picture of the bright but varied scene which lies in the way of the Christian's pilgrimage towards heaven, as it is in the power of language to paint. The dwelling in the House of God, and the delightful occupation of praising Him, to which the sacred poet ascribes this blessedness, is that child-like devotedness of the heart, which is a lantern unto the feet, and a light unto the path of the humble Christian disciple, while going through the vale of misery; this wilderness, which must be passed in our

way towards the heavenly Canaan. It is faith which guides his footsteps to the wells of salvation, whose pools are filled with that blessed element of the soul's health, which whoso drinketh shall never thirst again. In its refreshing power shall he go on from strength to strength, until he reach the Sion of eternal rest; where the God whom he hath served, loved, and worshipped, shall appear unto every one in his unveiled glory; welcoming his chosen ones; the heirs of his salvation; and confirming that universal invitation once pronounced on earth from the lips of his own beloved Son—Come ye blessed children of my Father; receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world!

Ver. 8—13. These verses are an outpouring of the Psalmist's own personal faith and feeling—a prayerful expression of that deep devotedness to the will and worship of God, which forms the perfection of the Christian character on earth. It is vain, it is worse than vain, for it is a mockery of God, to offer unto Him the empty homage of the lips, while our hearts are studiously estranged and withheld from Him. My son, give me thine heart: and in return for this only, may we hope to experience that final blessedness upon which the Psalmist dwells with the fervour of immoveable faith:—The Lord God is a light and defence: the Lord will give grace and worship, that is grace and glory—which is our Bible translation—grace here, and glory hereafter; and shall withhold no good thing. Wherefore, brethren, the true conclusion of the whole matter is that to which David himself has come, and which is obvious to every man's understanding—O Lord God of Hosts, blessed is the man that putteth his trust in Thee!

PSALM 85.

This is one of the Psalms adopted by our Church for the service of Christmas Day, when by the advent of the Redeemer the spiritual captivity of God's chosen people was dissolved. The Psalm consists of two distinct divisions only—the first, a joy-

ful acknowledgment, by anticipation, of the fulfilment in the Person of the Messiah, of the Covenant made with Abraham, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed; the second, a prayer for the personal redemption of the faithful from the penalties of those sins which by our frailty we have committed; that all may be made partakers of the salvation wrought for us by the then expected Messiah, and become inheritors of glory with the saints in light.

Ver. 1—3. It is evident from the use made of this Psalm by our Church, that by her it is regarded as an inspired effusion of that strong faith in the Redeemer's Advent, which possessed the minds of all faithful Israelites long before the event took place: David speaks of it as a promise already fulfilled, and rejoices in its effects upon the spiritual condition of his people. He refers to the displeasure and indignation of the Almighty at the rebellion of him whom He had created in his own image, and endowed with immortality and honour: but rejoices that God had forgiven his offence, and covered all his sin; had become gracious to the offspring of the guilty parent, and had turned away the spiritual captivity of the children. All this could be effected only by the redemption wrought in Christ Jesus: and from the succeeding words of the Psalmist, the *Name* whereby he calls upon God for personal conversion, must be admitted as proof that the royal prophet had a clear foresight of the character of that redemption, which was about to be accomplished.

Ver. 4—7. It is to God as his Saviour that the Psalmist makes his prayer, imploring the mercy of God the Father, on behalf of himself and his people Israel; and praying that they may be partakers of that everlasting salvation, which is assured to every true Israelite, only by the atonement and mediation of God the Son. The temporal evils which pressed so heavily upon the chosen seed, sometimes occasioned a despondency in the mind of their pious king, as though he feared that their God was displeased at them for ever. But he knew that the fervent and effectual prayer of the righteous never ascends in vain to the footstool of the Mercy Seat: he therefore entreats

the Lord to turn again, if He be still displeased with his people, and to quicken them by the operation of his Holy Spirit, that they may also turn to Him, and rejoice in Him.

Ver. 8—13. As regarding himself, the Psalmist adopts the only true means of propitiating the divine favour. He searches his own heart, seeking comfort from the voice of God within him, the testimony of his own conscience; that he may know what to expect from his prayers. For he is deeply convinced that God shall speak peace unto his accepted servants, and to his faithful followers, that their feet might not be again entangled in the meshes of sin, nor turn again from the observance of his perfect laws, provoking his renewed anger. He is convinced that salvation is nigh unto them that fear God; and that the glory attendant upon its universal reception must enlighten the land, wherever it is thus sought and found by the humble believer: because that in the covenant of grace, the offences against God's truth, the provocations of his justice, are so veiled and overshadowed by the union of the divine attributes, that mercy may be extended to the sinner without violation of the unchanging Truth of God; and that the imputed righteousness of the Redeemer shall bring peace and reconciliation between the offending creature and the pardoning Creator. And such shall be the happy fruits of this dispensation of grace, and of its universal reception in our hearts, that truth shall flourish as the green herb out of the earth; and righteousness, which belongeth unto God only, shall shed its approving smiles from the bright canopy of heaven upon the ways of man; thus manifesting the loving-kindness of the Lord towards his people; assuring to the land the blessings of his favourable care, in the abundance of her productions, the peace of her dwellings, and the well-being of her favoured people. For as righteousness shall go before the Giver of every good and perfect gift, so shall He direct our goings in the way that leadeth unto everlasting life.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XXXIII.

PSALM 86.

The order in which this Psalm appears in the collection has given rise to sundry conjectures among the learned, which, however, lead to nothing decisive on so unimportant a question. It is undoubtedly, as its original title states, a prayer composed by David; and the intensity of its spirit indicates that it was the effusion of some period, when his own personal safety was endangered by the persecution of Saul. It has been, however, by some expositors, exclusively applied to the Messiah, on account of a single word which occurs early in the Psalm, and which we will consider in its proper place.

Ver. 1—7. The deep humility of this prayer indicates that consciousness of the necessities of our nature, which must prompt all our supplications at the footstool of grace and mercy, if we would offer an acceptable sacrifice to Him who requireth truth in the inward parts. It was the caution and reproof of the Holy Spirit to the Church of Laodicea, that while she boasted of her riches, the abundance of her goods, and that she had need of nothing; she was ignorant of her own spiritual destitution: she knew not that she was wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Such, however, is the discovery which must follow upon an honest and earnest self-examination. Pride can retain no place in the heart which knoweth its own bitterness, and yearns after the refreshing dews of divine Grace to purify and strengthen it. Its own poverty and feebleness, and consequent misery, will awaken in it an echo of the Psalmist's devout prayer—Bow down thine ear, O Lord, and hear me; for I am poor and in misery! Yet may the humble Christian, while under the consciousness of spiritual poverty he calls for help from Him that is mighty, plead his high privilege as a member of the Body of

Christ; that is, his sanctification by relationship to the Author and Finisher of his salvation. He may plead his comparative integrity and holiness, as did the pious Job:—Till I die I will not remove my integrity from me; my righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; that which is with the Almighty will I not conceal. In this sense must we interpret the prayer of David—Preserve Thou my soul, for I am holy. Such was he practically, among the men of his generation; and such was he especially, as the chosen and anointed servant of God, and as the type and prefiguration of the true David, the Holy One of Israel. Yet under all this consciousness of comparative superiority, the Psalmist does not abate a jot in the humility or fervency of his prayer; his sufferings were the immediate motive to that prayer; but his faith, and not the sense of his own righteousness, gave to it the intensity of earnestness which pervades it. In the time of my trouble will I call upon Thee, for Thou hearest me. We see then that the term, I am holy, in its absolute and emphatical meaning, is applicable only unto Christ; yet that it is not presumptuously pleaded before the Searcher of Hearts by and of David himself.

Ver. 8—13. In this passage we see the mind of the Psalmist bowing itself in the acts of adoration and thanksgiving. This imparts a refreshing strength to the spirit of prayer, in meditating on the Majesty and Goodness of Him, before whom all nations, and every individual of every nation, must bow down and worship; whether in willing and holy obedience, in faithful reliance on His merciful loving-kindness; or in abject and hopeless fear, in the time of the manifestation of His wrath. The Psalmist had chosen the better part: his mind had been subdued by a pervading sense of the Divine Goodness towards him, which he had the wisdom to feel and acknowledge, amidst all the permitted chastisements inflicted upon him by the agency of wicked men. The remembrance of his deliverances floated as it were on the sea of troubles over which he

had passed—it was as the buoyant bubble reflecting the light of heaven, and inspiring hope and peace in believing; and the experienced mercy of his God prompted the desire, that his heart might never be seduced or estranged from the feelings of devout gratitude which then possessed it:—O knit my heart unto Thee, that I may fear thy Name; for Thou hast delivered my soul from the nethermost hell—the pit which the ungodly have so often digged for my destruction.

Ver. 14—17. In these verses, as before remarked, the spirit of prayer is manifested in renewed strength by the previous meditation on the Divine Goodness towards the suppliant. Predominant as was his faith in the future protection of an almighty arm, the Psalmist could not be unmindful of surrounding perils. They hedged him in on every side; he was as a bird in the snare of the fowler: yet he knew that his foes could have no claim on the divine assistance, or encouragement in their lawless designs; for they were godless men, proud, and dependent on their own united strength for the success of their wicked projects; they had no belief in, much less an acknowledged dependence upon, a paternal Ruler of the universe, who will not suffer his faithful children to be tempted or tried beyond what they are able to bear; but will with the temptation also make a way for escape. No—they had not set God before their eyes. Their strength was therefore comparative weakness; the congregations of naughty men were feeble against the single fugitive who was protected, defended, supported, by the unseen arm of Omnipotence. But on this Power was David's sole reliance; and the incense of his prayer, floating around the Mercy-seat, was unto him as a pillar of a cloud by day, and by night as a pillar of fire, to confound his enemies. Herein lay that strength in which he put his trust—O give strength unto thy servant! shew some token upon me for good, that they who hate me may see it, and be ashamed: because Thou, Lord, hast holpen me and comforted me.

PSALM 87.

This Psalm is purely prophetic, and exclusively descriptive of the future Church of Christ. It is thought that the opening words, "Her foundations are upon the Holy hills," do not properly belong to the Psalm, but that they originally formed a part of its title. They certainly give an abrupt opening to the Psalm, having no grammatical connection with what follows. This brief composition, however, appears in all the dignity of inspiration; though it must have sustained some loss of its original force and beauty by translation.

Ver. 1—7. In another Psalm the benefits of religious communion and fellowship are likened to the natural refreshment which the country derives from the dews which fall on the hill of Zion; because, there the Lord promised his blessing, and life for evermore. God is Love: and the universe is warmed and enlightened by this all-pervading attribute: it cannot be otherwise, however, in the nature of things, than that the Deity should concentrate his favourable kindness upon the place and among the people where his honour dwelleth. The inspired writer therefore asserts, that the Lord loveth (even the gates of) Zion better than all other places in Israel: and then, referring to the earlier prophecies of the universal establishment of Christ's Church, he thus apostrophizes the city of Jerusalem—Very excellent things are spoken of thee, thou city of God. We will take only that in the 23rd chapter of Jeremiah as an illustration:—Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is the Name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. And to this universal dominion the inspired writer calls attention in terms of a remarkable character, and giving to the beloved city herself the honour of being the spot chosen of the Lord to be the birth-place of man's redemption and salvation, under the promised reign of the

Holy One of Israel. The third, fourth, and fifth verses may be thus understood:—Think of Rahab (i. e. Egypt) and Babylon, the Philistines also, with them of Tyre, and the Ethiopians: it shall be said even of them, under the spiritual rule of Messiah, when they shall hear the glad tidings of salvation, and be converted—it shall be reported of these that they were born in Sion; that at her breast they were nourished and brought up; and that at all her fresh springs they drank of the water of life freely. And moreover, in that day when the Lord shall count his people, in the book of remembrance written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his Name, He shall rehearse of the redeemed from among the Gentiles, that they were born in Sion. So great also shall be the felicity of Jerusalem, that she shall be the seat of perennial and sempiternal rejoicing and gladness; for the fountains of all blessedness shall flow in her, fraught with whatsoever things are pure, and lovely, and of good report. For the mystical sense of the concluding verse, however, we must consult the sublime vision of St. John:—And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the Tabernacle of God is with men; and He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people; and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. (*Rev.* xxi.)

PSALM 88.

Neither the author nor the occasion of this Psalm has yet been traced with any certainty. It is a personal lamentation of the deepest mournfulness, and could scarcely have been made applicable in all its parts to the circumstances of any individual since the writer himself. It is a melancholy effusion of agonized feelings; and as Bishop Home remarks, "The nature and degree of sufferings related in it; the strength of the expressions used to describe them; the consent of ancient expositors; the appointment of the Psalm by the Church to be read on Good Friday: all these circumstances concur in directing an application of the whole to our Blessed Lord."

Ver. 1—18. In applying this Psalm exclusively to our blessed Redeemer's earthly sufferings, we see in it a detailed commentary upon that beautiful appeal in the book of Lamentations (i, 12,) which, though in its original sense deploring the miserable state of Jerusalem in the time of the prophet Jeremiah, is painfully descriptive of the extreme anguish of the Holy Victim of Jewish malice:—Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto Me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted Me in the day of his fierce anger! These latter words detract nothing from the truthfulness of the appeal, nor from the propriety of its application to the Holy One of Israel. The fierce anger of the Almighty was kindled against sin by the disobedience of Adam; and as sin itself was propagated in his race, so it gained strength and boldness in its progress, until the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and it repented the Lord that He had made man; and it grieved Him at his heart. The Son of God, therefore, suffering under the fierce anger of the Almighty, bore the penalty of our guilt in his own body; He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. And moreover, it was throughout his pilgrimage, from the manger at Bethlehem to the sepulchre nigh Jerusalem, that the Man of Sorrows sustained the weight of Almighty Vengeance, provoked by the sins of mankind. But it is of the last sad scene of all—its prospective horrors, and the dark scenes presented by an agonized memory, that the painfully minute details of this Psalm are chiefly descriptive. It opens with an earnest prayer—that suspension of his daily toil, which may be said to have been the only recreation of our Saviour's laborious life: and this prayer is prompted by a review of the overwhelming sorrows that encompass Him round about. And, brethren, when we reflect, that He came upon earth purposely to expiate our guilt by a death of extreme torture, after a life of labour and

sorrow; that the indignation of all-perfect Justice offended, was concentrated upon the head of Him who knew no sin, but voluntarily suffered, the just for the unjust; that the punishment due to the offences of a thousand generations of men was inflicted only upon the One Great Mediator; and that He passed his life on earth in the daily contemplation of the unavoidable burthen He must sustain, the unspeakable sufferings He must bear, in order to make perfect his work of mercy:—when, I say, we reflect upon all this, we cannot wonder at the depth of the complaints which He uttered, while existing in our frail and sensitive nature; taking upon Himself, as the Evangelist quotes from Esaias, our infirmities, and bearing our sicknesses. Yet throughout this Psalm, we see that the terms employed are more expressive of the sufferings of the Redeemer's spirit than of bodily pain:—My *soul* is full of trouble! There was the anxiety of the Divine Mind for the completion of the great undertaking of man's salvation: there was the weakness of our mortal nature contending against its portion of the painful conditions: there was the oppression and there was the affliction to be sustained, though in unequal parts, by the body and by the spirit: in every sense the Saviour had to bear our griefs, and to carry our sorrows. Nor are we to suppose that his pains were mitigated by infusion of any repellent properties of the Divine Nature. No—He took our nature upon Him, was in all points tried as we are, and sustained that nature with all its imperfections on his head. He knew that his life must be sacrificed to the malice of his enemies, and felt that it was already drawing nigh unto the grave. He saw that the consummation of their guilt was eagerly anticipated; that they already regarded him as condemned to the pit; and that He could be freed from their tyranny only when consigned to the abode of the unremembered dead. His was not the experience of a partial infliction of punishment, which may be borne to-day and forgotten to-morrow. He was conscious of

his awful undertaking; and that He must bear the weight of the divine indignation against mankind at large, until the phial of wrath should be poured out, and the voluntary Sufferer had been vexed with all its storms! Nor was it the least of his sufferings, that when betrayed into the hands of his murderers, He was deserted and denied, under the influence of a cowardly fear, by his lovers, his friends, and his acquaintance; while his adversaries rushed around Him, and compassed Him together, as an overwhelming tide. The three verses, 10, 11, 12, have been considered by some to militate against the doctrine of the resurrection; whereas they confirm it. (Read.) But these words were imputed to the *Man* Christ Jesus: and the most established Christian may, in the immediate fear of death, offer this plea, in the hope of a restoration to life and health: but it would not indicate his want of faith in the resurrection. The passage may be understood in the positive sense—Thou *dost not* shew wonders, &c. Thy loving-kindness *shall not* be shewed, &c. Thy wondrous works and thy righteousness *shall not*, &c. Thus then is the doctrine of the resurrection plainly implied. But, thanks be to God, we are not left in darkness upon this all-important subject. The Resurrection and the Life have been manifested to our sight in the Person of Him, who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, who died for our sins and rose again for our justification, and who now and ever liveth at the right hand of God, making intercession for us, deeply touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XXXIV.

PSALM 89.

The history of this Psalm, as well as that of the preceding one, is involved in some obscurity. They are ascribed to two brothers of the family of Zerah; the author of this, according to the Hebrew inscription, was Ethan; and it is supposed to have been written during the Babylonian captivity. As, however, it is appointed by our Church to be used on Christmas day, this is presumptive evidence that it was admitted by the Fathers as prophetic of Christ's kingdom, and of the fulfilment of the promise which the Lord made unto David, that He would establish his seed for ever. Thus appropriated, therefore, we proceed to its analysis.

Ver. 1—4. This was the announcement of the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary:—Fear not Mary, for thou hast found favour with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of his father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. In the opening verses of the Psalm there is a variety, which at first sight appears intricate, and is confusing to the general reader. The writer first speaks in his own person, and pours out his rapturous hymn in the spirit of deep meditation, and of thankfulness for the divine mercies promised in the covenant of David. We can scarcely comprehend it as an effusion penned amidst the sufferings of captivity. But as we proceed further into the Psalm, we shall perceive, that it was dictated by a strong faith, which rose above every surrounding evil, and fixed its eye upon the panorama of promise, which lay around and beyond. The Psalmist exclaims, that Mercy shall be set up for ever, and the Truth of God be

established in the heavens. And this is the truth upon which he rests his faith, now speaking in the name of Jehovah Himself: I have made a covenant with my chosen: I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever; and set up thy throne from one generation to another. This explains the want of change in the grammatical person, observable in this passage. And it is from the contemplation of this gracious covenant that the sacred poet rises to the warmth of expression, which bursts from his heart in the opening of this Psalm; and flows onward, in the tide of majestic eloquence which pervades the long anthem of praise we are now about to consider.

Ver. 5—36. I know not how otherwise to treat this sublime celebration of the Majesty and Faithfulness of Jehovah, than by attempting a close paraphrase of its language:—

The heavens, O Lord, shall praise thy wondrous skill,
 And all th' assemblies of the righteous fill
 With adoration of thy Truth! For who 'mongst all
 The bright creations of thine hand shall call
 On man to bow the supplicating knee,
 For gifts and graces found alone in Thee?
 Or who is he among the glorious throng
 Of Pow'rs celestial, to whose claims belong
 The incens'd praises that are only thine,
 CREATOR! GOD! OMNIPOTENT! DIVINE!
 To Thee the saints on earth their homage pay,
 In fearful reverence of thy boundless sway;
 But more in love: by eager faith descried,
 Thy Truth, most mighty Lord! on every side,
 O'er all thine equal attributes, like light
 Diffus'd, invigorates our feeble sight.
 Foremost thy Pow'r, the effluence of thy Will,
 As at the first, proclaims the Godhead still.

The raging sea, submissive to thine hand
 As wayward infancy, owns thy command ;
 As when its refluent waves o'er Egypt's host
 Silenc'd th' oppressor's pride-inflated boast ;
 And scattering far thy people's daunted foes,
 To them, in love, thy mighty arm disclose.
 Thine are the heavens ! the earth is also thine !
 The strong foundations, laid by skill divine,
 From north to south confess their Maker's pow'r
 Now, as when dawn'd Creation's nascent hour :
 From Zion eastward, Tabor's sacred hill *
 And dewy Hermon westward, triumph still
 In thine Omnipotence ! Thy strong right hand
 Sustains their primal glory as they stand.
 But higher attributes than boundless pow'r
 Dispense their blessings for thy people's dow'r :
 Righteousness, Justice, Mercy, Truth, combine
 Their radiant beams in thine eternal shrine ;
 And as Thou goest forth, in them we trace
 The unapproach'd wonders of thy face !
 And happy are we, walking in that light,
 Rejoicing in thy love, thy care, thy might ;
 Yea, while with boastful gladness we proclaim
 Our hope, our faith, our freedom, † in thy Name !
 In Thee thine erring children find at length
 Th' imparted grace and glory of their strength :
 Thy loving-kindness lifts their head on high
 O'er all the conflicts of their destiny :
 Thou, their defence, inspir'est them to sing,
 " The Holy One of Israel is our king !"
 Sometime Thou spak'st in visions to thy saints,
 Cheering with promis'd grace their deep complaints :—

* Judges iv, 6.

† 2 Cor. iii, 16—18.

I have exalted One above the throng,
 Mighty to succour and redress your wrong ;
 My consecrated servant David stands,
 Matchless in strength, upholden by my hands ;
 O'er Him the enemy shall not prevail,
 Before Him shall the sons of Satan quail,
 Till his foes, smitten down before his face,
 Lament their crimes in ruin and disgrace.
 While for Himself, my Truth and Mercy wait
 T' exalt his horn above imperial state ;
 To give Him his dominion in the sea,
 And o'er Euphrates' floods the sovereignty : *
 He shall be call'd my First-born, and shall stand
 Higher than all the rulers of the land :
 And this my covenant shall evermore
 Stand fast with Him, as doth my vow of yore
 With faithful Abraham his sire. His throne
 Shall as the days of heaven endure, alone.
 For though his children should forsake my law,
 And break my statutes, standing not in awe
 Of my commandments and my judgments true,
 And I should visit them with scourges due ;
 Yet shall my loving-kindness never fail,
 My covenanted Truth shall still prevail :
 For by my Holiness I once have sworn
 I will not leave my servant's seed forlorn :
 They shall endure for ever, and their seat
 Be high exalted 'bove the worldly great,
 And in coëval progress with the sun
 To endless ages shall their glory run :
 While to Himself a sceptre shall be given,
 And as a faithful witness shall He stand in Heaven !

* Deut. xi, 24.

We must here recal to mind, brethren, the remark made in the early part of this Lecture, that it is difficult to conceive how the sublime effusion we have just concluded, could have been penned amidst the miseries of captivity. We come now, however, to the explanatory part.

Ver. 37—44. The inspired writer seems to have been wrapt in a vision of ecstasy, which carried him far beyond the painful realities of life by which he was then surrounded. But as, when one waketh out of a dream, the objects of sense supersede those of the imagination, he felt his share of the actual condition in which his countrymen were dragging on the load of their daily existence; and the strong contrast between those scenes which his memory and his faith had spread out before him, and that bitter experience which poisoned all his passing days, produced this sudden extremity of complaint, which occupies almost the entire remainder of the Psalm. But the fulfilment of that threat to visit the offending children with a rod, and their sin with scourges, which we have lately read, was now in operation. For the reign of the good and zealous Josiah, was succeeded by those of Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin, who did evil in the sight of the Lord, and provoked Him to anger; so that He gave the people of Judah over into the power of their enemies, Pharaoh-Necho king of Egypt, and Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. It is a fearful account which the Psalmist gives of the national desolation: but we must not interpret the terms used as if they were applied to David himself. The language is general, wherein the writer says,—But Thou hast abhorred and forsaken thine anointed, and art displeased at him. The anointed king of the day was Jehoiakim, and the bondage of the people in his reign was the consequence of their own wickedness: they had forsaken the law of the Lord, they had broken his statutes, and kept not his commandments. The most interesting portion of this division of the Psalm remains to be considered. This part is merely a

lamentation over the condition of Judah at that time, but with much of poetic beauty in the description of her sufferings, and the fate of her king. Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned only eleven years, during three of which he was servant to the king of Babylon. How beautifully descriptive, therefore, is the language of the Psalmist, as applied personally to the king:—Thou hast put out his glory, and cast his throne down to the ground: the days of his youth hath Thou shortened, and covered him with dishonour! In that which follows, however, we see the natural workings of a pious mind, when contemplating the sorrows of a numerous people; and in whose behalf the gifted writer implores the God of Heaven, by his mercies and loving-kindnesses of old, and by his covenant with David, to have compassion on his suffering countrymen.

Ver. 45—50. The prophet Isaiah thus summons the whole world to faith and obedience:—Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander of the people! The writer of the Psalm is evidently, in these verses, giving vent to his impatience for the visible fulfilment of the promise of the true David, the Messiah: for even so far back was the covenant with David so understood; although the people of that time accustomed themselves too much to look for only temporal deliverances, giving too literal a meaning to the language of the prophecies:—for instance, to this—In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people: to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand a second time to recover the remnant of his people which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath,

and from the islands of the sea : and He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah, from the four corners of the earth. But it is obvious from the turn of the expressions in this Psalm, that the writer expected in the Messiah a spiritual Redeemer : for he uses the brevity of man's life upon the earth as an argument for the necessity of such redemption ; and, that without this gift, God had made man for nought. His own consciousness of immortality filled him with a dread of the consequences of death, as it did all the faithful who lived before the advent of the Redeemer ; for they knew that no man could deliver his own soul. And the temporal inflictions of his wrath, with which the Almighty saw good to visit the transgressions of the people and their wicked kings, were so many arguments with frail humanity, that God might have withdrawn his old loving-kindness, and annulled the covenant which He had sworn unto David in his truth. The Psalmist therefore earnestly calls upon the Lord to manifest Himself in the fulfilment of his gracious promise, under the natural apprehension that he himself should not live to rejoice in that day. Lord, how long wilt Thou hide Thyself, for ever ? Remember how short my time is ! Remember the rebuke that thy servants have ! and, speaking of himself as one of the few faithful in a land of prevailing impiety, he complains of the many mockeries and insults he has to bear from the infidel and the backslider. And it would seem from the language of the concluding verse, that there was a general defection from the acknowledgment of the One True God among the people ; for that though their king reigned in wickedness, yet was the formal profession of the national religion maintained ; and this was made the occasion of blaspheming God, and of slandering their anointed king, for his maintenance of even the outward shew of allegiance to the King of Kings. Such is the progress of wickedness among a people, who have before their eyes the example of evil rulers.

Such was the rapid progress which the blasphemy of the Jews made, under the influence of the High Priests, and the Scribes and Pharisees, and the Herods, who persecuted the Son of God unto the death. Such blasphemy and mockery of all that is good and true may be seen, even now, in a Christian land; though the force of the law and of public opinion serve to keep its expression within limits prescribed by fear or shame. The evil heart of unbelief is however seldom subdued, and scarcely ever purified of its judicial hardness. Be thankful, brethren, that in our favoured country we have little temptation, and less encouragement, to this mystery of iniquity—for infidelity *is* a mystery, even in the mind that has no other light for its guidance than that of natural reason: and here, no one is left to that imperfect instructor alone, but through his own wilful perverseness. The Covenant of Grace and Truth is a lantern unto the feet and a light unto the path of every one, who is not stubbornly resolved to walk on still in darkness. It is proclaimed from the rising up of the sun to the going down thereof; and its universal call is, He that hath an ear, let him hear! Therefore, praised be the Lord for evermore! Amen and Amen.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XXXV.

PSALM 90.

It appears from the title of this Psalm that it was not written by David, but by Moses the Man of God; and must therefore be the oldest of the entire Book of Psalms. The supposed occasion of writing it was that awful period in the history of the Israelites, when, murmuring at the supposed dangers of taking possession of the promised land, the anger of the Lord was kindled against all Israel:—and He said unto Moses, Because all those men which have seen my glory and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, have tempted Me now these ten times, and have not hearkened unto my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers: and your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness: after the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years; and ye shall know my breach of promise. I the Lord have said, and I will surely do it unto all this evil generation, that are gathered together against Me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die! (See *Numbers* xiii, xiv.) The pious affection of Moses for his people was always most powerfully manifested under their various murmurings and provocations; and this mournful elegy is a record of the intensity of his feelings, when the Lord had pronounced his final sentence of their exclusion from the rich inheritance which He had promised them, even in the days of their father Abraham. (*Gen.* xvii, 7, 8.)

Ver. 1—7. As Moses was the earliest, so he may be considered the greatest of the prophets, wherefore he is significantly called the Man of God. And how truly in character is this devout, prayerful, and mournful Psalm! What more awful subject of contemplation could possibly be offered to the sensitive heart, than the spectacle of six hundred thousand men condemned at once to everlasting banishment from an inheritance which was theirs under a divine promise; but which they had forfeited by continued rebellion and murmuring against the Giver of all their good? For it was nothing less than the sentence of death passed upon every individual son of Abraham,

at the very moment when he might have realized his heirship to a long life of peace and plenty, in a land flowing with milk and honey—a land so fruitful in its soil, so nutritious in its temperature, so blest in all the means of fertility, that, as we read in the book of Numbers, when the messengers returned to make their report, after an inspection of the country, a single cluster of grapes which they brought away required two men to carry it between them upon a staff. But the exclusion of these 600,000 from the promised land, was not all, nor the heaviest part, of the penalty of their faithless disobedience. All that were numbered of them, according to their whole number, from twenty years old and upwards, who were the devoted victims of their own sinfulness, were probably parents; and how numerous must have been the mourners, as one by one of that immense number fell under the execution of that awful sentence within the brief space of forty years! their carcasses left to waste in the wilderness, and their offspring doomed to wander beneath the burthen of their sorrows, till the last man of the devoted number should have made way for the fulfilment of the suspended promise. Why, every day's experience, during those forty years, must have impressed their afflicted Leader with those feelings of the nothingness of human strength and human pride, when set in opposition to the will of an Omnipotent, but beneficent God; and which are so beautifully expressed in this meditative hymn! It were vain and useless, my brethren, to think of throwing further light upon the passage I have read; it needs no explanation but that which your own feelings will supply, when you peruse it in a teachable temper of mind; or when you hear it pronounced, as many of you have and may, over the remains of a departed friend, or peradventure a beloved relative.

Ver. 8—10. From this painful contemplation of the effects, the sacred writer turns to the causes of the divine anger; and makes confession of those sins and misdeeds which had pro-

voked it. He then shews the folly of so frail a creature as man, resisting the ordinances, rejecting the counsels, and despising the beneficence of his Omnipotent Creator; for that at the best human life is but a span; and at its close, however well employed, our past years are nothing more in substance than as the fleeting breath in which a tale has been told. And, moreover, that should a larger share of bodily strength sustain us beyond the limited days of our age, that surplus is but a period of increasing labour and sorrow. Yet,

Thankless for favours from on high,
 Man thinks he fades too soon;
 Though 'tis his privilege to die,
 Would he improve the boon.

Ver. 11—17. The opening reflection of this passage is somewhat obscurely translated; it applies to our condition, however, equally as to that of the Israelites; for *we* are yet wandering in the wilderness; and though we for our misdeeds experience the divine anger, we know not the power of that anger, as it shall be manifested in the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgments of God. Most appropriate to our uncertain and ever-changing condition, therefore, is the prayer which was prompted by this reflection—a prayer for the wisdom that shall watch over the departing days and hours of our brief existence; a prayer for redeeming grace in the times of our backsliding; a prayer for mercy against judgment, that we may rejoice even in this life under its manifestation; a prayer for the in-dwelling comfort of feeling, that the days of our travail are well nigh past; a prayer for that enlightenment, whereby we may discern the work of grace, and mercy, and love, in our behalf, and the glory of the Divine Majesty in all his attributes; and that he may bless, prosper, and perfect us in our pilgrimage and warfare, until we reach the heavenly Canaan, the lot of our inheritance, secured to us by the divine promise, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

PSALM 91.

This Psalm has no title in the original, and few expositors have attempted to assign it to any particular writer: one, however, of good authority, ascribes it to the prophet Gad, who is called David's Seer: for that it was penned upon the occasion of the great pestilence, with which the Almighty visited the people for David's presumptuous sin, in taking the number of the people, contrary to Joab's earnest remonstrance. The Psalm is a composition of great beauty; and its purport appears to be, to testify the writer's own faithfulness in the divine protection, in that season of general calamity and fearfulness, and by his example to strengthen the confidence of others. The frequent change of persons, however, throws around this otherwise perfect composition some little obscurity. Nevertheless, it is this very change of persons which gives to the Psalm the appearance of its having been written to encourage the religious confidence of others, as well as to give expression to that of its Author: for it is thus adapted for use in private worship.

Ver. 1. Keeping in mind the occasion of this Psalm, the opening verse seems to be intended as a general argument, for the encouragement of those who were shrinking under the dread of the divine visitation upon themselves individually, but who acknowledged the all-ruling Providence of the Most High: for it is the assurance of one of God's most favoured servants, that they who trust in the defence of the Lord God Omnipotent, shall share the benefit of his protecting wing, until the prevailing plague be stayed. And the encouragement is strengthened by the prophet's example:—

Ver. 2—8. For here the gifted Seer proclaims his own confidence in the God of his salvation, and gives to others the assurance of his authority, that they also shall be delivered from surrounding perils; from the designs of their enemies, which he compares to the snare of the hunter; from the noisome pestilence which was then desolating the population of Jerusalem, and of all the coasts of Israel, and whereby seventy thousand men were cut off. He promises to all the faithful that they shall continue in safety under the almighty guardianship,

and that his faithfulness and truth shall be their shield and buckler; protecting them from nightly terrors and from daily dangers: for that, though thousands should fall beside them, and ten thousand at their right hand, that is, in their very sight, the sword of the destroying angel should not come nigh them: while, at the same time, with their eyes they should behold and see the reward of the ungodly. And this concluding verse of the passage plainly implies, that the prophet's assurance of safety was conditional upon their own unwavering faithfulness and trust in God.

Ver. 9—13. This division of the Psalm opens in precisely the same terms as the last, and takes a similar turn, from personal profession to prophetic assurances; varying only the figurative language in which those assurances are conveyed. In the 11th and 12th verses we find the words which are made memorable, as having been employed by the devil in our Saviour's temptation in the holy city; when the language of Scripture confounded him; for there is no record of his ever after attempting to use it. The expressions, the lion and adder, the young lion and the dragon, are typical of those spiritual foes, which only the faithful and obedient followers of the Lord shall tread under their feet: for of such the prophet goes on to speak, in the Name of Jehovah Himself:—

Ver. 14—16. The promises herein contained, have many parallels in the pages of Holy Writ; and this justifies the prophet's bold utterance of them, as if immediately from the mouth of God. It were vain for us, my brethren, to put our trust in any of the seemingly divine promises conveyed to us by the agency of man, if we were not supported by our own internal conviction, in the belief, that the Seers of old, the Evangelists, and the Apostles, all spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost: and there is not a character in the Old and New Testament, to whose name attaches stronger historical evidence of his divine commission, than in the case of the prophet Gad,

the supposed author of this most comfortable Psalm. Take then to your own hearts the promise herein conveyed : Because he hath set his love upon Me, (saith God,) therefore will I deliver him : with long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

PSALM 92.

The title of this Psalm in the Hebrew is, *A Song of the Sabbath*, but the writer of it is not named. Many of the Jews, however, have cherished the unsound fancy that it was composed by Adam, immediately after his creation; but they fail to shew us how it was preserved until now; and we have no reason to think that the schoolmaster was abroad in those days. The purport of the Psalm seems to be, to instruct the faithful how most profitably they may study the divine administration of human affairs. It forms also an appropriate part of the public worship of God in the Sanctuary: for, as in the intervals between Sabbath and Sabbath, man is too prone to lapse into habitual sin; the works of God's creation and providence furnish on that sacred day some of the fittest subjects for his meditation.

Ver. 1—4. Thankfulness is undoubtedly a feeling from which we may derive the purest gratification; but we cannot experience that feeling unless we are duly conscious of blessings or benefits that call for it. And there are no other objects, having equal claims to our habitual gratitude, than the visible works of God's hands, and the beneficent dispensations of his Providence; for they are all equally designed for our advantage and our happiness. It is a self-evident truth, therefore, that the spirit of thankfulness is the evidence of our appreciating the divine bounty towards us; it is the outpouring of that spirit of joy, which every good and every perfect gift of our Creator is designed to animate within us. It must be consequently, as declared in the simple language of the Psalmist, a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord; to record his loving-kindness in our hearts, to proclaim it with our lips, to shew forth its manifest influence upon our lives, and to celebrate it with all our powers, whether of harmony or of silent praise.

Ver. 5—8. As the Psalmist had before chiefly spoken of the divine attributes, the loving-kindness and truth of the Lord, it is probable that here also his thoughts continue to flow on the same subjects; and that he is speaking further of the glory of those works which are wrought in God's moral government of the world: for this interpretation best harmonizes with the words, Thy thoughts are very deep. The wisest of his creatures will ever acknowledge, that his ways are past finding out; and it is not the practice of the unwise to consider or reflect at all upon either the visible or the moral works of the Deity, as such; while the fool, who altogether doubts of the government of a Supreme Being, until he is led to say in his heart, "There is no God," is judicially blinded by that power whose existence he denies, until even his understanding is darkened. But the Psalmist, marking the course of God's dealings with his creatures, discerns the operations of the divine hand in the fate of the ungodly, who are often cut down in the fulness of their verdure, while they are green and flourishing as the grass. The workers of iniquity, also, indulging in the pride of their false designs, are equally obnoxious to the divine wrath; and these, with the ungodly, when they fall, fall to rise no more: they shall be destroyed for ever! In this conclusion the Psalmist acknowledges his own conviction of the depth, that is, the perfectness of God's attributes, and of their obvious manifestation in the government of the world.

Ver. 9—14. As a further argument that the righteous Lord is the Ruler of the universe, the sacred penman here expatiates upon his manifest loving-kindness for such as are his faithful servants: and, conscious of his own integrity of heart and purpose, exults in the assured hope of his final exaltation and salvation; and that being anointed with fresh oil, that is, a renewal of spiritual strength, he is confident that even in his earthly pilgrimage, the Lord will vouchsafe to grant him all his desire upon his enemies, and upon the wicked that rise up

against him. Moreover he encourages all his righteous people in their onward path of duty and faithfulness, by likening their future condition to that of some of the most magnificent products of the most fertile climate—the palm-tree and the cedar of Libanus. But he grounds his predictive promise upon their presumed fidelity to the service of God, their diligence in observing his statutes and ordinances, and their earnestness of endeavour to walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameless: for all this is implied in that poetic figure, Such as he planted in the House of the Lord. To these he gives the assurance that they shall flourish and abound; being more and more fruitful as they advance in age, and retaining their health and vigour unimpaired. These effects, he reminds them, depend not upon his own assurance, but upon the faithfulness of God to all his promises; for as he acknowledges the Lord alone to be his strength, he foretels that their own experience shall convince themselves how true the Lord is to his word, and that there is no unrighteousness in Him. Herein the Psalmist, whether he were David or another, shews his faithfulness as a ministering servant of the Sanctuary: for no less under the old dispensation than under the new, did it behove the preacher of righteousness to exhort and persuade with all gentleness, to be all things unto all men, that by all means he might save some.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XXXVI.

PSALM 93.

Several of the Jewish writers of greatest note have interpreted this Psalm as chiefly applicable to the reign of Messiah; while it is addressed by the inspired writer himself to the Triune Jehovah, which produces no incongruity; since it was by the manifestation of God in the flesh that that reign was fully established in the earth, and more effectually in the hearts of men. Without going into the question whether or not David was the author of this Psalm, (for it is admitted that some of the Psalms are not of his composing,) we must regard it as an inspired effusion, rich in prophetic grandeur and beauty; descriptive of the Majesty, and Truth, and Holiness of God, as displayed in the work of our redemption, by the Advent of the long expected Messiah; and it is therefore peculiarly worthy of the contemplation of Christian believers in every age, who may joyfully confess, as did the aged Simeon—Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace: for mine eyes *have seen* thy salvation!

Ver. 1—3. As, at the time of the Saviour's first appearance on earth, the Deity was clothed in the weakness of infancy, the heir of poverty, lying in a manger, to which only the favoured few who had seen his star in the east could approach in faith;—so it was, that in the earlier ages of the world, the Godhead was veiled from the understanding of even his own chosen seed, by reason of the ignorance that was in them, and because of that blindness of the heart which was a portion of the penalty of the first act of disobedience. This blindness manifested itself among the Israelites, with a strength apparently proportioned to the wondrous evidences of an all-ruling Deity, whether displayed in their favour or for their punishment: inso-much that in all their experience of the wonders wrought in the elements of the natural world, it would seem from their rebellious stubbornness, that they thought the miraculous convulsions of the earth and of the waters, were the effect of some

magic power possessed by their leaders, Moses and Joshua. It is not easy otherwise to account for the transient impressions left on their minds by the most stupendous miracles; and which the exercise of their reason alone, we might imagine, would have taught them to ascribe only to Almighty Power. But as God's choice of the seed of Abraham, from among the entire human race then existing, was a type of the redemption which it was determined in the eternal counsels of the Most High, should be wrought for all the children of Adam; so was the conduct of the Israelites a close prefiguration of that of mankind in general; when the Messiah so long promised came to visit us in his great humility; for he came unto his own, and his own received Him not. It is therefore in the application of this Psalm to the glories of the eternal reign of the Messiah, that we see the grandeur of the prophecy: for as to the Israelite, so to the Gentile world, (of whom, brethren, are we ourselves,) the King of Glory, though He took our nature upon Him, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, full of grace and truth;—to the Gentile world, I say, HIS Majesty was veiled by the all-pervading power of unbelief; and He performed his wondrous works in vain in their sight; and He was despised and rejected of them; no less than was the Lord Jehovah Himself, by those towards whom He had manifested his loving-kindness, by so many signal instances of his boundless power over the universe of nature. But more than once hath God said, Let there be light! and there is light. For though in each case—that of the Israelite and that of the Gentile—the light at first shined in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not; yet are we now awakened by the power of Divine Grace, and by the newer and more resplendent light of the glorious Gospel of the ever-blessed God, to a sense and an acknowledgment at least, of what God hath wrought for us. The anointed Messiah hath emerged from the humiliation of his earthly travail; He hath wrought the great work of our redemption

from a worse than Egyptian bondage, even from the tyranny of the powers of darkness; He hath resumed the glory which He had with the Father before the world was: He hath asserted his supremacy as the universal King, putting on the glorious apparel that belongeth to his dignity, and girding Himself with the strength of Omnipotence. His throne hath been prepared from and for eternity, Himself being the eternal co-equal God-head, by whom the round world is so surely fixed that it cannot be moved: who is alone worthy to receive glory, and honour, and power: for He hath created all things, and for his pleasure they are and were created.

Ver. 4, 5. In these verses the Psalmist speaks figuratively of the opposition of the world to God's just and beneficent government, whether in the times of the Patriarchs and Prophets, or of the Messiah Himself. He compares the raging of the heathen nations to the voice of many waters, the roar of contending waves; acknowledging that they are mighty, and rage horribly: but it is only to shew the quiet contrast between the exercise of his moral and spiritual power by the Almighty Creator, and the terrible raging of his creatures; whether they are the lifeless elements of the natural world, or the rational beings whom He had created in his own Image, to hold dominion over all things therein for the allotted time of their possession. All Nature, including its innumerable orders of animate but irrational creatures, owns the Omnipotence of its Author, and obeys his laws: it is the heart of man alone that rebels against his Sovereignty, raging horribly against his pure and perfect spiritual Law, which is given us as a lantern unto our feet, and as a light unto our path, to guide us in the way of peace. Yet are we here quietly reminded, that the Lord who dwelleth on high is mightier!

Ver. 6. It is upon the firm foundation of God's Holy Word, which is here called his Testimonies, that the Christian rests his confidence in all the promises it contains, and all the hopes

he entertains, of quietness and assurance for ever. But holiness of life is the condition on his part,—that fruit of a living and visible faith, which is ripened to perfection by Divine Grace unto obedience to all the dispensations and commandments and ordinances of the Lord. As the house of Israel in the old time constituted the Church of God, so does the household of Christ in our day compose his visible Church: and in so much as it exists under a better Covenant than that of Abraham, in so much it is more forcibly manifest, that holiness becometh *this* House for ever.

PSALM 91.

It is doubtful who is the writer of this Psalm; for by some it is imagined to have been composed during the time of Israel's bondage under the Pharaohs; by others in the reign of Saul, in which latter alternative only could it have been written by David. In either case, however, it treats of the existing oppression of God's people, by those who were permitted by Divine Providence to exercise their authority over them. And it opens with a prayer for their deliverance, and an enumeration of the wrongs and sufferings they are made to bear. Their oppressors are reproached as fools whom God will punish in his own good time: and the meek and patient are encouraged by the assurance, that there is a blessedness in the chastenings of the Almighty; that He is still their sure Refuge, and will justly recompense the wickedness of their enemies.

Ver. 1—7. We are reminded, my brethren, by God himself, that to Him alone belongeth vengeance, and that He will in no wise clear the guilty. This consideration ought to restrain our impatience, and to assuage our desire of revenge, under whatever injuries we may be appointed to bear. And the value of this lesson cannot be too highly rated, when we reflect that besides the importance given to it by the inspired writers of the Old Testament, it is often forced upon our attention in the Gospel of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Redeemer's own words are, In your patience possess ye your souls. This He said to his disciples when shewing them that they should be betrayed, and hated of all men for his Name's sake.

His great Apostle also encourages the exercise of this Christian virtue, by pointing out the example of the suffering servants of their Divine Master, while engaged in the work and labour of love; as well as the blessedness that follows immediately thereupon: for we glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope—the hope that maketh not ashamed. Nevertheless, the oppressor, the murderer, the slanderer, and others of like character, will for a time perform their permitted work; for a brief season in all ages and generations the ungodly shall triumph: but, Lord, how long? For though they say, Tush! the Lord shall not see; neither shall the God of Jacob regard it; yet He who careth for his faithful ones neither slumbereth nor sleepeth; but in the fast-coming day of his wrath will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life. But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.

Ver. 8—11. All sorts and conditions of men should regard this solemn caution as addressed to themselves individually: for it applies not only to the open and notorious offender against the divine laws, but to every child of Adam; for all have sinned, and do sin, and will sin, and thus come short of deserving to share in the glory to be revealed hereafter, as the inheritance of the just made perfect. And the terms of this caution are wisely adapted to the comprehension of the most simple-minded among men. Take heed of that small but unruly member which the Apostle James most truly declares to be a fire, a world of iniquity, defiling the whole body, and setting on fire the course of nature; being itself set on fire of hell. Whatever be your religious profession, the same Apostle

declares that it is a vain profession, by every one who bridleth not his tongue. But the strongest argument in favour of this self-control is that presented to us in this Psalm; for, as the writer of it asks, He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? And if it be true, as we are forewarned, that we shall be judged for every idle word that is spoken, where will the slanderer, the habitual liar, the blasphemer, stand in the great day of their final judgment? And not only shall our words be recorded, but all our actions shall be weighed in the balance of the Sanctuary: and the question here following in order, is an unanswerable answer to the foolish suggestion of the heart, Tush, the Lord shall not see—What! He that made the eye, shall He not see? Vain indeed are the thoughts of man, when so perverted: and more foolish are all his actions, that are not controlled by a sense of the Divine Omnipresence and Omniscience; while he is taught alike by revelation, by reason, and by conscience, that the Lord knoweth even the thoughts of his heart, long before they are uttered or displayed in action.

Ver. 12—15. Since, therefore, He who planted the ear, and made the eye, takes cognizance of the thoughts and words, designs and actions of all his responsible creatures; there can be no reasonable doubt in the hearts of any who believe in the written Word of God, that He will hereafter judge the world in righteousness; and that whatever comparatively light afflictions are here permitted to try their faith and patience, they are but the ministrations of his love, and sure though dim evidences of the blessedness that awaits the just in the day of his righteous retribution. The days of their adversity and suffering will then have vanished away as a dream when one awaketh: for while the pit is digged for the ungodly, and God shall take away their part out of the book of life, and from the things which are written therein; the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father: for the Lord will not fail his people, nor forsake his inheritance, though He sees

fit to try them here, as silver is tried, and purified in the fire ; until their righteousness which seemed for a while to have been forgotten in the dispensations of Divine Justice, shall turn again unto, that is, be placed in the view of unerring and impartial judgment ; and where they who oppressed them, and they who afflicted them, shall confess in the bitterness of their own now condemned spirits,—We fools accounted their life madness, and their end to be without honour. How are they numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the Saints ! These verses form what may be styled an interjection between the preceding ones and those which immediately follow. They present, however, reflections very natural to a pious mind.

Ver. 16, 17. Here, as if in indignant despair of finding any aid from the dull and ignorant and indifferent professors around him, who have indeed a form of godliness, but know nothing of its power ; the inspired penman asks, Who is here that will help me ? Who will take my part against the wicked and the evil doers ? No—an evil example finds more followers than opponents among men ; and many a humble Christian has felt the experience, and made the acknowledgment in his heart, that if the Lord had not helped him, his soul had certainly been put to silence.

Ver. 18, 19. But it is here confessed, that the feet of even those who are strong in faith may sometimes slip ; that doubts and fears may occasionally paralyse the habitual firmness of their hearts ; that overwhelming sorrows may shake their confidence in the impartiality of Divine Providence, the perfectness of Divine Justice. The spirit of the Christian will, however, return to its strong hold ; its light afflictions will have passed away ; the clouds that obstructed its upward gaze will have vanished ; it will see its great Deliverer face to face ; and will be constrained to confess, Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up, though thy saving arm was for a season invisible to the eye of trembling faith : in the multitude of the sorrows that I have

had in my heart, thy comforts, and thine alone, have refreshed my soul.

Ver. 20—23. When Abraham was interceding with the Lord, for the few righteous that might peradventure be found in the condemned cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, he thus apostrophized the Judge of all the earth—Far be it from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee! So in this Psalm the purport of the appeal to God is reversed: it is not in favour of the righteous; but in abhorrence of the wicked, the blood-thirsty oppressors of God's chosen flock—Wilt Thou have any thing to do with the stool, that is, the low grovelling seat, on which the workers of wickedness enthrone themselves? Thou wilt not! For while they make their love of mischief the law of their actions, Thou wilt be my refuge from their malice: Thou, O God, art the strength of my confidence. I trust in thine impartial justice that in thine own appointed time Thou wilt recompense them their wickedness, and destroy them in the very devices whereby they meditate to indulge their own malice. My confidence is not in the arm of flesh, nor in mine own strength; but in the timely manifestation of that all-just Omnipotence, which will silence the voice of the floods of man's iniquity, when their waves are lifted to the highest, raging horribly; for the Lord who dwelleth on high is mightier; and He, even the Lord our God, shall destroy them. For He will not finally forsake his faithful ones, who call upon Him in the day of trouble; neither will he fail them in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XXXVII.

PSALM 95.

It is true, we are very familiar with the language of this Psalm ; but how intimate we are, severally, with the spirit of it, each of us must answer to himself. It is, as we know, the introduction to our Sabbath-day worship ; the previous portions consisting of ministerial exhortations, the general confession, the absolution, and our Lord's Prayer, used here as a supplication for the efficacy of that absolution. The Psalm is the first general act of thanksgiving in our Service ; a mutual call upon each other to render to God the honour due unto His Name. And it is distinguished by a much larger portion of the spirit of true worship, than we, perhaps, accustom ourselves to look for in it. It was undoubtedly composed for public use in the Divine Service of the Jewish Church : and if so, must have held much the same place in that, as in our own. It is equally clear, that it is the composition of David himself, from the reference made to it by the great Apostle in his epistle to the Hebrews, (iv, 7.)

Ver. 1, 2. The first great motive to all Christian worship is in fact, and ought to be practically, the grateful consideration of the salvation from the heavy penalty of sin, (which is eternal death,) that has been purchased for us, and secured to us, by the propitiatory sacrifice of the Son of God Himself. It is truly in the *strength* of their own salvation that we may rejoice ; even in Christ Jesus ; who of God, that is, through the mercy of God, is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption ; that being by Him made free from sin and its dreadful recompense, we may be actuated by simple gratitude to become the servants of righteousness ; that is, the faithful and willing servants of our Redeemer, striving in all things to do the will of God from the heart. And in this impressive Psalm we are not only excited heartily to rejoice, as the heirs of a promise which cannot be annulled ; but we are hailed forward, as it were, to form an assembly of worshippers,

wherein we may give an unrestrained expression of our joy, in songs of praise and thanksgiving; even in his Sanctuary, which under his promise is ever blest with His Presence, when even only two or three are met together in His Name. Here we may sing unto the Lord, and shew ourselves glad in Him with Psalms. Not that we are to consider the act of singing to be an exclusive expression of rejoicing: for the quiet satisfaction of the heart is a melody that pervades our entire nature, and thrills and vibrates even through the courts of heaven; provided that satisfaction is the fruit of a devoted faith and confidence in the strength of our salvation. If it spring in the heart, it will ascend to the lips; and whether in prayer, or in praise, or in the contrite aspirations of a humbled spirit, will partake of the nature of rejoicing.

Ver. 3—5. The Psalmist here illustrates the preceding phrase,—the *strength* of our salvation,—by declaring the power, the magnificence, and the glory of our God, as the Creator, the Disposer, the Ruler of all things. The Lord is not only great, but even as a God He is great, being the King of all that is called god, whether in heaven or in earth. For we, the members of Christ's Holy Church throughout the world, acknowledge Him to be the Head of the ever-blessed Trinity; the Father, of an infinite Majesty; whom all the earth doth worship, as the Father Everlasting; to whom all the angels cry aloud; the Heavens and all the Powers therein. The terms used in these verses are figurative, but strongly expressive of boundless power and universal dominion.

Ver. 6, 7. This exhortation is peculiarly adapted to the members of Christ's Holy Catholic Church; since, in the Gospel Dispensation, the heart-service is that which is alone pronounced to be acceptable unto God, the rights and ceremonies of the Jewish worship being fully and finally abrogated. The sacrifices acceptable unto God, under the Covenant of Grace, are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart; that is, a spirit subdued by the power of divine grace, and no longer in

captivity to the law of sin ; a heart devoted to the service of God, and manifesting its regeneration, its death unto sin, and its new birth unto righteousness, by thoughts of holy fear, and aspirations of holier love. For as He is our Lord, so are we his creatures. He guideth us through the wilderness of this world like a flock of sheep : and under this figure we are not only a people, held together by his Providence in society, and in mutual recognition of each other ; but we are also *his* people, the faithful, gathered together into one fold, into one Church, and bound together in one mystical body ; depasturing our souls in one verdant paradise of hope and promise ; and under the care and guidance of one Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. Wherefore we are exhorted, and in the act of public worship do exhort each other, to hear His voice in the day of grace ; the high and holy Sabbath which is the type and foretaste of the promised rest, never proclaimed until the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the promulgation of his glorious Gospel of grace, mercy, and peace. In the possession and consciousness of these privileges, therefore,

Ver. 8—11. As the great Apostle, in the earnestness of his spirit, and his anxiety for the salvation of men, proclaims, Behold, now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation ! so the Psalmist summons us to an instant attention to our deepest interests : warning us against indulging the stubborn delay of an evil heart of unbelief :—To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts ! And to make this call the more impressive, he speaks in the Name and as in the Person of Jehovah Himself :—Forty years in the wilderness did your fathers tempt Me and prove Me, though they saw my works. Forty years long was I grieved with their provocations, until I swarc in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest. Against such hardness of heart, and such provocations, is His voice heard in his holy temples from Sabbath to Sabbath : for the mere knowledge of the Gospel, the very form of public worship, are calls to hear His Voice : they are ministrations

of mercy, appointed to subdue the natural hardness of our hearts, lest we fall into the sin of tempting the Lord our God to wrath, as did the Israelites under Moses, by doubting his Omnipresence—Is the Lord among us or not? For by neglecting his worship, and polluting his Sabbaths, we give practical evidence of a working infidelity; in which as many as will continue are obnoxious to the divine wrath, and endanger their own souls, by provoking the God of Truth to swear that they shall not finally enter into his rest—that rest which He hath prepared for all such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.

PSALM 96.

It is said of this, and the 105th and 107th Psalms, that they were given by David to Asaph, to be set to music for the celebration of the safe depositing of the ark in the city of David, as related in the 16th chapter of the first Book of Chronicles. It is certainly a fine song of exultation, worthy of such an occasion, and of the high character of its pious Author. Many commentators apply it exclusively to the glory of Messiah's Advent, of which the depositing of the ark may undoubtedly be considered a type: but whatever might have been David's prophetic thoughts, the mass of the people could scarcely have carried theirs beyond the scene before them, of which the Psalm was so suitable a commemoration. For as the Ark was held by them to be a sacred emblem of the Divine Presence, it was of itself a sufficient motive to national rejoicing, that after a long privation it was now safely deposited in Salem.

Ver. 1—4. In order to feel the force of this glowing hymn, we must imagine the scene described in the Book of Chronicles as before referred to, as well as the occasion it was intended to celebrate. And we may yet further strengthen our conception of its magnificence, if we look back to the perils which the good king and his people had encountered in their struggles for the peaceful establishment of the throne and kingdom; and the deep feelings of grateful adoration with which they assembled to acknowledge the Divine Goodness, in having thus delivered them from the power of their heathen foes. Then only can we enter into the spirit of this sublime song of thanks-

giving. Nothing could be so well adapted to stir the hearts of a whole people to devotional praise, as the joyous piety which seems to have prompted the pen of the inspired writer on entering upon the task he had undertaken, with a view to its impressiveness on the minds of his people, when they should assemble to celebrate the happy event. In the fulness of his heart he calls not only upon them, but upon the whole earth, to sing unto the Lord, to praise His Name, to proclaim his honour unto the heathen, his wonders unto all people, and to be telling of his salvation from day to day. He confesses, however, that even thus the Lord Jehovah cannot worthily be praised: for that his greatness, the fearfulness of His Majesty, exceeds all the notions which the children of men can imbibe from their knowledge of earthly power and dominion; or even from what they may have heard of heavenly thrones and principalities. The Lord is more to be feared than all gods; that is, those who in the scriptures are called gods; namely, angels, and rulers, and judges of the earth. And from these the Psalmist descends to a comparison, or rather a contrast, of the objects of the blind worship of the heathen:—

Ver. 5, 6. It may seem to us, who are enlightened by the knowledge of the Gospel, a thing incredible that human beings, rational creatures, and therefore bearing about them some remains of the Image of God stamped upon our nature at the creation, should be so debased in their minds, as to fall down and worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers had made. But it is a fact for which we need not go very far back into the world's history. It was, however, universally prevalent until it pleased God in his mercy to select a chosen family from among the nations, to make known his relation to the children of men, and his claim to their homage and obedience. Yet the gross delusions of idolatry maintain their sway over the human mind even to this day. We cannot therefore be surprised, that David should have felt it necessary,

repeatedly to bring forward the subject to his own people, who were the immediate descendants of thousands that had been led astray to the worship of idols, during the several periods of their captivity under heathen rulers. Here then he contrasts these representative toys of a host of imaginary gods with the One True God, the Creator of the Heavens—that most sublime and mysterious and incomprehensible, among the visible productions of Omnipotence. But it is only in the Sanctuary of the King of kings and Lord of lords, that glory and worship, power and honour, claim the spiritual adoration of his creatures. Wherefore the Psalmist invokes all mankind and all created things, animate and inanimate, to rejoice in Him, and to stand in awe of Him.

Ver. 7—13. In this comprehensive exhortation David speaks as one having authority, beyond that of a mere earthly ruler of one particular nation. He was prophet, priest, and king; and in this threefold character he assumes a higher tone than could with propriety be adopted by him in any single capacity. He addresses himself to all the descendants of Noah, under the title of kindreds of the people, calling upon them in a thrice repeated phrase, to acknowledge the God of Heaven and Earth:—Ascribe unto the Lord, ascribe unto the Lord, ascribe, I say, unto the Lord, worship and power, and honour: bring presents unto Him, and come into his courts: let the whole earth stand in awe of Him, and worship Him in the beauty of holiness. Make it known unto the heathen that the Lord alone, who is Creator of all things, is also King over all, and upon all will execute righteous judgment. Not the inhabitants only, but the heavens and the earth and the sea, and all that they sustain, shall therefore rejoice in Him:—for He will come, the promised Messiah, to dispense righteousness, and truth, and judgment in the earth, and to shew his chosen ones the way of that salvation which He hath prepared for them from all eternity.

PSALM 97.

This Psalm is universally understood as prophetic of the temporal and eternal reign of Messiah, which we, having seen in his first Advent, have every assurance that the denunciations and promises which apply to his second advent will be fully verified, with all its accompanying terrors and rejoicings. The passages which apply to the first period are chiefly figurative; those that belong to the day of the Lord, when He shall come to judge the world in righteousness, are far exceeded in forcefulness in many parts of the New Testament. In this Psalm, however, they are so blended together, that the attempt to separate them in recital would be injudicious.

Ver. 1—10. The faithful among the Israelites in David's time could not but rejoice in the hope of Messiah's Advent; the promises of which in the Old Testament were accompanied by the prospect of so many advantages to themselves. Nevertheless, they had cherished very false notions of the character of that Just One, as well as of the nature of the benefits they should derive from his coming. Few of them carried their thoughts beyond the contemplation of a temporal sovereignty, which should dispense every national blessing exclusively among themselves. This was the prejudice of a stubborn and proud people, which not even the gifted spirit of David could subdue in them. Many of the Psalms, however, have a spiritual and prophetic import, which in the seasons of public worship must have awakened thoughts too deep to find a resting-place on the theory of a mere human Messiah, a temporal ruler. And of this description is the one now under consideration. It is a sublime and comprehensive foreshadowing of the two distinct eras of human emancipation from that power which brought death into the world, and all our woe: and the colourings of each separate subject are so blended together, that they can only be contemplated as an indivisible record of cause and effect. And when we remember that there were twenty-eight intervening generations from David to the birth of the Redeemer, we are constrained to admit that the Psalmist could

have penned this incomparable prediction of the glories of Messiah's reign, only under the guidance of divine inspiration,—that he wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. Moreover, it is not improbable, that this mysterious revelation of the future might have been needful at the peculiar period of the establishment of the Ark of the Covenant in Zion, and the strong manifestations of the divine favour towards David personally—I say, it might have been needful at this time, to impel forward the unsettled minds of the Israelites to the contemplation of a more spiritual dominion than they had yet conceived, lest they should gradually fall into the error of imagining David himself to be the Messiah so long promised. For we read, that even after our Lord's crucifixion, and while his disciples were successfully labouring in the spread of the Gospel, men were prone to give divine honours to any one who seemed superior to themselves; for even of the murderous Herod, the slavish people shouted the blasphemous sentence, when he made an oration unto them, “that it was the voice of a god, and not of a man!” The spirituality of the hortatory portion of this sacred hymn is at once definite and decisive of its purport; namely, to prepare the hearts of the worshippers for a purer dispensation than that of the Law, which the Apostle of the evangelical doctrine teaches *us* was only our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. It was our Saviour's reproach to his disciples, when He drew near and went with two of them on their journey to Emmaus, immediately after his resurrection, that even they were fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets, from Moses downward, had spoken concerning the True Messiah. How needful, then, to the Jews of David's far-off day must have been the spiritual doctrine propounded by him in the three concluding verses of this Psalm. [Read 10--12.]

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XXXVIII.

PSALM 98.

Many are the subjects in this Psalm, for which the pious David calls upon all the sinful children of Adam to give thanks, and to praise the Name of their ever-gracious God. And the blessings of the dispensation of Grace,—that coming evidence of God's love which he saw only with the eye of faith,—forms a leading feature in the character of this evangelical Psalm. For David speaks of the redemption that should be wrought for mankind, by the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh, as confidently and as particularly, as though he had lived after our Saviour's appearance: yet, as is detailed in the opening of St. Matthew's Gospel, there were twenty-eight generations from David before the birth of the Saviour, and the consequent fulfilment of all the promises which had been given to the house of Israel. Much power is attributed in the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to the prayer of faith: but here we see how nearly allied is this gift of God to the spirit of prophecy.

Ver. 1, 2. These verses introduce the great subject of the redemption of man, by calling upon us to sing unto the Lord a new song: the whole earth is required to give evidence of its grateful sense of the never-ending benefits conferred by the New Covenant which God had condescended to enter into with his creatures; the marvellous things wrought for our redemption, whereby the heathen and gentile world, whose children we are, is delivered from the wrath to come, by his holy hand, and by his right arm, working out the victory over our spiritual enemy; and in the sight of all men openly shewing his righteousness in the fulfilment of the first promise made to man, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, and deliver us from the power of sin, and its penalty, everlasting death.*

* There are two beautiful illustrations of this second verse in the prophecy of Isaiah, (lix, 16, and lxiii, 5,) which proclaim the divine love to man with touching force:—And He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him, and his righteousness it sustained him. Again, And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore, mine own arm brought salvation unto me, and my fury it upheld me.

Ver. 3, 4. It is conjectured with much probability, that when the aged Simeon took the child Jesus in his arms, and blessed God for the occasion, he had the first of these two verses in his thoughts, when he uttered his memorable thanksgiving:—Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of thy people Israel. The mother of our Lord is also supposed to have in her mind the second of these verses, when reciting that beautiful expression of praise which is introduced into our Evening Service:—He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel, as He promised, &c. These examples prove how deeply the Psalms of David were impressed upon the thoughts and feelings of the pious in the later Jewish Church, and in what great veneration they were held as prophecies of the true Messiah.

Ver. 5—10. The first three of these verses relate only to the mode of conducting the public worship of the Tabernacle with the aid of musical instruments, some of which, occasionally mentioned in the Psalms, are unknown to us. The next succeeding verses are remarkable only for the examples of that bold figure of speech, in which the animated writer frequently indulges, called the *prosopopœia*, and by which inanimate things are represented as having the powers of speech and of actions which can be performed only by man. Yet the second of these licenses of language is at once poetic, elegant, and expressive:—Let the floods clap their hands: for it is no straining of the fancy to liken the noise of meeting and clashing waves to the sound of many human hands exercised in concord for the expression of general joy. But the Psalmist calls upon man and nature to be joyful before the Lord, by reason that He is come to judge the earth; and as an evidence of their confidence, that He will judge the world with righteousness, and the people with equity. This, however, relates chiefly to the dispensation of

reward and punishment under the Jewish economy. But it behoves us, brethren, to look with the eye of faith to the final day of retribution; for if, as we profess to believe, He who died to save us, on the condition that we come unto God by Him, shall come to be our Judge; it behoves us, I say, to take heed to our ways that we offend not, either by the neglect of his laws or by the violation of them; for He will certainly judge us with perfect righteousness and with impartial equity. This is a subject for serious reflection to those who profess that they know God, but in works deny Him.

PSALM 99.

The argument of this Psalm is similar to that of some preceding ones. Yet, if it bear any reference to the reign and kingdom of Messiah, the application is so veiled in the language of the earlier dispensation, that it is difficult to trace it. And peradventure it was the will of the Holy Spirit that the prophet should speak less plainly of the Messiah in this than in the preceding Psalms. As far, therefore, as it is intelligible, we must search for its literal sense.

Ver. 1—5. This opening proclamation of Jehovah's universal dominion is a sublime appeal to the fear of man—that passion of our common nature, which, whether it be awakened by simple reverence for the object of its contemplation, or by the anticipation of coming evil, commonly produces a tremor of the mind and frame. This the Psalmist represents by the terms impatient and unquiet. In his exhortation to magnify the Lord our God, and to fall down before his footstool, he calls alike upon the humble believer and the scorner; offering to the one, all the encouragement to be derived from the certainty, that the God in whom he puts his trust is the All-powerful Ruler of the Universe, the King of the entire creation; and implying that a reverential fear of Him is the bond of his safety. To the other, the proclamation that the Lord is King, is a summons to the fearful looking-for of his judgment and fiery indignation:

for there He sitteth enthroned in his glory between the cherubims, however impatient be the people, however unquiet their souls under their stubborn perseverance in the contemptuous disregard of his laws. The terms of the 4th verse are somewhat obscure: but as Israel in its integrity was the type of Christ's universal Church, so does the name Jacob, taken in a spiritual sense, represent the whole body of Christian people; and the Psalmist displays the moral magnificence of the Lord's dominion over all, by shewing that from the beginning He hath loved judgment, and prepared equity for his people, acknowledging that through all their past experience of the divine rule, the children of Abraham, the sons of Jacob, had witnessed that the Lord executed judgment, that is, perfect justice and righteousness in all his dealings towards them. And from this appeal, the grateful king of Israel turns only to exhort all people in their seasons of impatience, the whole earth in its faithless inquietude, to magnify the Lord, to humble themselves at his footstool, to fall down before Him, to worship Him in the beauty of holiness; for that Jehovah Himself is supremely holy.

Ver. 6—9. To encourage the faithful in the worship of God, the highest examples are produced from the sacred histories: for these holy men are unto every succeeding generation patterns of the faith that maketh not ashamed, the obedience that through knowledge of the Divine Will maketh wise unto salvation. (2 *Tim.* iii, 15.) For when they called upon the Lord, He heard and answered them—Moses and Aaron from the cloudy pillar, and Samuel from the holy of holies, the throne of his Sanctuary in heaven. He heard them, for that they had kept his testimonies: He answered them in the dispensations of mercy and judgment toward the people whom they led, and taught, and ruled: He forgave their sins, but not without some manifest and memorable rebukes; for their idolatry in making the golden calf, (*Exod.* xxxii;) for their schismatic rebellion in the matter of Korah, (*Numb.* xvi;)

for their national apostacy in desiring a king, when the Lord their God was their King: In this manner He punished them for their own inventions. These punishments were, however, equally with all the special favours experienced by God's chosen people, manifestations of his holiness, claiming the homage and worship of the succeeding generations. Therefore, as at the beginning of this Psalm, its pious author proclaims the Majesty of the Lord; so in the middle and at its close, he calls upon all the earth to magnify his holy Name, and to worship in the Sanctuary, for that above all the other divine attributes, the Lord our God is holy. And this conclusion forms an appropriate introduction to the following Psalm.

PSALM 100.

This, like the 95th Psalm, forms a portion of the Morning Service of our Church, and is very properly followed by the confession of our Christian faith in the form of words which we recognize as the Apostle's Creed. It is said in the Chaldæe Paraphrase, that it was used as a form of thanksgiving at the peace-offering recorded in the Book of Leviticus (c. vii.) If this assertion be correct, the Psalm must be of earlier date than the time of David; a conjecture which receives some negative confirmation from the fact, that the titles of this and the two preceding Psalms, which bear a common resemblance in the spirit and matter of them, do not ascribe them to David's pen. This however is a composition of great beauty, derived from the earnestness of its style; whether we take the hortative portions, the first and third verses; or the second and fourth, so warmly descriptive of the paternal character of the Deity, and so expressive of the devotional love and confidence of the pious minstrel. We often hear and repeat this Psalm; but it is to be feared, that seldom is its spirit felt to communicate its sacred warmth to our own hearts. Let us now therefore ponder a little while on its beauties.

Ver. 1—4. It was the privilege of the beloved disciple of Jesus to give for the better instruction of mankind, the character of the Godhead in a single comprehensive word: and one, (in whatever language expressed,) which sooner than all others, is welcomed by the human heart, in spite of all its inherent and contracted depravity—**GOD IS LOVE!** The fear

of God is the beginning of wisdom, but the perfection of wisdom is the love of God; for as the same disciple has declared in connexion with those words, He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. How appropriate, therefore, is the Psalmist's exhortation, when contemplating the most endearing attributes of the Deity, that all men should be joyful in the Lord, serve Him with gladness, and approach His Presence with even a mirthful gratitude. Surely this were practical godliness: for it is commended by the Psalmist as the fittest accompaniment, as it is the strongest testimony to our sincerity, when we approach his gates, when we enter into his courts, with our sacrifices of thanksgiving, and praise, and adoration. And to strengthen this exhortation, we are reminded that we are his by creation; that of a surety the Lord is our God, and we his children and the sheep of his pasture; and moreover in confirmation of the sublime and encouraging doctrine that God is Love, is the no less inspired record that He is ever gracious, his mercy being boundless and everlasting. Nor is this all: We, St. Peter reminds us, we, according to God's promise, look for new heavens and a new earth. Upon this and correspondent promises are founded all our hopes; and these hopes are more or less consolatory, and influential upon our passing life, in proportion to the strength of our Christian faith, that the written Word is the Word of Truth; and that this truth is the Truth of God, in which there can be neither variableness nor the shadow of a change, but that it endureth from generation to generation. O then, be ye joyful in the Lord: go your way into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and speak good of his Name!

PSALM 101.

This Psalm is the record of David's thankfulness and vows, when after the death of Saul, as related by the prophet and historian, (2 *Sam.* i, ii, iii,) the anointed son of Jesse received commandment of the Lord to commence his reign in the city of

Hebron; and the time that David was king in Hebron, over the house of Judah was seven years and six months. For there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker. The virtues and piety of the young monarch secured to him the shield of Omnipotence; and these graces are beautifully exhibited in the Psalm before us.

Ver. 1—3. These opening verses present us in a small compass the oblations of a grateful spirit, in the varied forms of praise and prayer, and of a comprehensive vow. The mercy of which the Psalmist speaks is doubtless that which he had so often experienced, and in the continuance of which he cherished the strongest faith. In the term judgment, it is probable he referred to his own upright intentions in the future administration of his kingly power: while he acknowledges that for the wisdom, the understanding that shall qualify him for the just fulfilment of his own designs, he must be indebted to the free grace of God:—O let me have understanding in the way of godliness! And the warmth of his feeling, which is always an evidence of sincerity, imparts to his expression an air of impatience—When wilt Thou come unto Me? when shall I see thy promised blessing upon Jerusalem, and peace upon Israel? for then will I walk before Thee and in the sight of my people with a perfect heart: for I am resolved, that—

Ver. 4—11. These rules of conduct, which David lays down for his own guidance, and vows unto the Lord that he will observe in the government of his household and kingdom, form an excellent manual of instruction, not only for rulers of kingdoms and all persons in authority, but also for the head of every family. David had seen in the court of Saul some specimens of every unworthy character with which he here renounces all fellowship—the unfaithful, the froward, the slanderous, and the man of proud looks and a high stomach: he had suffered severely from the malignity of such characters; and he resolved that in his care for his future subjects, the innocent should not

suffer from his cherishing the wicked among his counsellors and friends—I will not know a wicked person, a deceitful man shall not dwell in my house, he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. Mine eyes shall look only on the faithful; they alone shall share my confidence and protection; he only that leadeth a godly life shall be my servant. With these resolves, the young king of Israel looks forward to the rule of a righteous people, worthy partakers of the peace and prosperity which he himself hoped to promote and enjoy, when his throne should be established in the city of the Lord: from whence he trusted the ungodly and all wicked doers would be ultimately rooted out. “Let each individual in like manner be zealous and diligent to reform his own heart and ways; ever mindful of that future awful day, when the King of Righteousness shall cut off with the sword of eternal judgment all wicked doers from that city of God, the New and Heavenly Jerusalem.”—*Bp. Horne.*

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XXXIX.

PSALM 102.

This is one of the seven penitential Psalms, and bears the title of a Supplication of an afflicted people. The author is unknown, though it has been ascribed to the pen, among others, of the prophet Daniel. It embraces many subjects—of complaint, of hope, of resignation, and finally of confidence in the power and mercy of the eternal God.

Ver. 1—5. It is elsewhere remarked, that suffering is the natural motive to prayer, as prayer is the true medicine for suffering. Though the complaining portions of this Psalm are uttered as by an individual, yet are they descriptive of the sorrows of an entire people, when bowed down under one common calamity. The Psalm is supposed to relate to the Babylonish captivity; and every individual, being doomed to suffer the same privations and tortures with all his brethren in bondage, the prayer and complaint are equally appropriate to all and to each. The opening supplication is faithfully descriptive of intense and all but hopeless sorrow, claiming immediate attention as the only possible alleviation of intolerable suffering. The brief sentences follow in such rapid succession, as to indicate a breathless urgency which dreads and deprecates a moment's delay—O hear me, and that right soon! And the terms employed to describe the agonies of the suppliant are both forcible and eloquent, proving the writer himself to have been prompted by some vehement affection of the mind, far more painful than any bodily suffering. It is the sorrowful sighing of the prisoner; it is the longing after a lost home; it is the captive's remembrance of his native Sion, so beautifully described in the 137th Psalm. And the language here employed, painfully minute as it is, can scarcely be deemed figurative.

We, my brethren, who live in a land of freedom, sitting every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, none daring to make him afraid—in a land moreover, in which we enjoy the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free—we may have heard or read this touching record of sufferings a thousand times; and yet our sympathy may never have been awakened towards the complaining captives of Babylon. But this insensibility is induced by want of reflection. It may be replied, that compassion for the transient sorrows of those who for so many hundreds of years have slept the sleep of death, were as absurd as it is unavailing; but History is the hoary schoolmaster descending from the ages that are past, to instruct the living tribes of the human race, and the generations yet for to come. The exile and bondage of the Israelites of old are reflected in our day, in the experience of millions of our fellow men, whose only distinction from ourselves is the colour of their skin; whose only crime is their comparative weakness; whose only value in the sight of some who nevertheless profess and call themselves Christians, is the reward obtained for the treachery that consigns its victims to hopeless and endless slavery. Mammon is the god of this world; and he has the heart-worship of many, who with their lips meantime acknowledge the presence of an all-righteous God in heaven! The existence of this tyranny in our time—a more cruel tyranny than that of Egypt or of Babylon—claims our attention to the recorded complaints of Israel's bondmen. The spirit of the same complaints utters itself in the groans of millions of our living fellow-men; and the echo of these groans is reverberated through the vaults of heaven, demanding, and not in vain, the retribution of a just and eternal vengeance! The days of these living sacrifices to modern avarice are consumed away like smoke; their bones are burnt up as it were like a fire-brand; their heart is smitten down and withered like grass; they eat their bread in the merely momentary forgetfulness of their

tortures, while their thoughts revert only in anguish to their wild but beloved homes. If, brethren, we could bring ourselves habitually to reflect upon this picture, as the daily condition of thousands of our fellow-creatures, we should not forget *them* in our prayers, when we implore our Heavenly Father to shew his pity upon all prisoners and captives. For every heart and every voice in a Christian land should unite their aspirations to the Mercy-Seat in behalf of these victims of avarice, and in condemnation of the tyrannous and heathenish system of slavery.

Ver. 6, 7. The similes employed in these two verses are more expressive of mental anguish than of bodily suffering. The pelican and the owl are birds of solitary habits; the former is a native of the wilds of Africa, and is said often to sit for days and nights together in melancholy silence, till aroused by the calls of hunger: the owl is familiarly known to us as an unsocial bird of the night. In each, however, we see a fit emblem of the captive's condition, shut out from all social enjoyments, and in his case doomed, *against* nature, to the tortures of solitude; for the forced association of multitudes together in the pains and penalties of slavery, is the very worst degree of solitude. The simile of the sparrow derives all its force from the words, sitting alone upon the house-top, as if bewailing the loss of her mate; as in slavery all the ties of kindred and affection are broken asunder, and the bereaved heart, only, knoweth its own bitterness.

Ver. 8—11. The Psalmist here adverts to those heavy denunciations against Israel, which the several Prophets had been commissioned to proclaim, and which were now realized in the sufferings of the people:—Because of thine indignation and wrath Thou hast taken me up, and cast me down. The violent transition from great power and prosperity to a state of bitter slavery is here well expressed—the proportion of height to which an object is raised, preparatory to its being dashed upon

the ground, increases the force of its fall; and such was now the painful position of Israel; and, to heighten her sufferings, the tyrants who exercised dominion over her enslaved people, added insult to cruelty. Their enemies reviled them, and indulged in daily imprecations against their bondsmen, until as the sufferers grovelled in the dust, their food became polluted, and their tears were mingled with their drink. The last of these verses is merely a repetition of the third and fourth. But what follows is indicative of hope and confidence in the future, amid the severest trials.

Ver. 12—22. Here the Prophet foretels the calling of the Gentiles to the kingdom of Christ—the heathen shall fear thy Name, and all the kings of the earth thy Majesty. This passage is so clear and emphatic, that its fulfilment could be accomplished only by the calling of the Gentiles, *and* by the establishment of the Christian Church, of which the Tabernacle in Zion was the admitted type. But the prophet builds his vision of the future upon the unchangeableness, the faithfulness, and the mercy of Jehovah, as covenanted of old to his chosen people; though for a moment he yields to the weakness of human nature, and frames his prayer in the language of eager importunity, if not of impatience:—It is time that Thou have mercy upon Zion; yea, the time is come: for thy servants think upon her ruinous condition, and it pitieth them to see her in the dust. Yet the heathen shall come in, when the Lord shall build up Zion, and when his glory shall chiefly appear in his merciful restoration of his destitute people, and in answer to their desires and prayers. And this shall be written in tables of brass, and sculptured on pillars of marble, for a memorial to all generations, who shall hear and fear, and turn unto the Lord. In the closing verses of this division of the Psalm, the deliverance and restoration of Israel are prefigurative of the redemption to be wrought for mankind, by the fulfilment of the Covenant of Grace in the Person of the then expected

Messiah. For then should the Lord look down from his Sanctuary upon all his creatures, groaning in their captivity to the law of sin; under which law they were appointed unto death. And the result of this gracious dispensation should be the gathering together of all kingdoms, and nations, and peoples, to serve the Lord in the beauty of holiness; mutually and with one accord to declare His Name, and to worship Him in his sanctuaries; wherein God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.

Ver. 23—28. In the name of Israel the Psalmist renews his complaint, but with the prayer, that the existing generation may survive their captivity, and experience the loving-kindness of their God: for that as his years were from eternity, so shall they endure throughout all generations. Heaven and earth, saith the Redeemer, shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. And the Psalmist, addressing himself in faith to that promised Redeemer, foretels the blessed effects of his advent:—The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall stand fast in thy sight. For “whatever may be the fate of the present generation, whether they may live to see the accomplishment of all that has been foretold, or not; yet the Word of God standeth sure: there shall be always a Church, and an holy seed, to whom the promises shall be made good. They have already been fulfilled with regard to the advent of Messiah and the calling of the Gentiles. The events which are behind will come to pass in their seasons, until the counsel of God shall be finished, and every prediction receive its full accomplishment in the glory of the redeemed.”—*Bp. Horne.*

PSALM 103.

This Psalm presents a striking contrast to the preceding one; it is one continuous flow of thanksgiving for divine mercies, and seems to have been prompted by a recovery from sickness. It glorifies God, as well for the pardon of sins as for a

restoration to life and enjoyment. It exhibits no violent emotions of the mind, as seen in many of the Psalms, though the warmth of grateful adoration pervades the entire composition; while it contains a variety of curious poetical images, and is, as Bishop Horne observes, an evangelical and most comfortable hymn.

Ver. 1—5. Even those who do not accustom themselves to prayer may be incited to it by suffering in sickness; but the experience of God's mercy in our restoration to health, is a stronger test of the heart's religious sincerity, than affliction and the dread of death. It is easier to forget benefits past than present perils. And if the heart is so impressed with the consciousness of its experienced mercies, as to retain permanently a grateful sense of them, its daily aspirations of praise and thanksgiving and acknowledgment of their source, are far more acceptable offerings at the Mercy Seat, than the most earnest prayer that is prompted only by suffering or by fear. Here is the example in this fine hymn of devout thanksgiving: the Psalmist summons all the powers of his soul, and all that is within him, to praise the Lord, and to forget not all his benefits—an expression which indicates his deep sense of the multitude of those benefits. At the head of these he places the presumed pardon of his sins; for he wisely considers his restoration to life and health an evidence, that as the Almighty had not cut him off in his fierce anger, so is the divine mercy yet reserved for him. He rejoices therefore in hope, for that his infirmities were healed, his life was renewed, and crowned with mercy and loving-kindness, with all temporal plenteousness, and with the vigour of restored youth.

Ver. 6—14. Here is a reflective digression from the subject of the preceding verses, a general meditation on the divine attributes of justice and mercy; in which the Psalmist recurs to the earliest history of Israel's experience of those attributes, while under the guidance of God's chosen servant Moses: from the review of which he falls into a thoughtful contemplation of the Divine Character, and gives utterance to his feelings in

such language as is expressive of the deepest filial reverence and love; contrasting the Majesty of Jehovah with his tender condescension to his creatures; and teaching us neither to presume nor to despair. For though the Lord will not always be chiding, neither keepeth (that is, restraineth) He his anger for ever. Yet the past experience of every individual sinner may convince him, upon a little reflection, that the Lord hath not dealt with him after his sins, nor rewarded him according to his wickedness. This then is the earnest of future mercy, a good ground of future hope, if he turn and repent, and do works meet for repentance. For there is the written promise, that when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive: because, as the inspired penman reminds us, Like as a father pitieth his own (offending but repentant) children, even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear Him. And how beautiful is the reflection with which all this encouraging but cautionary display of the divine attributes is summed up:—He knoweth whereof we are made: He remembereth that we are but dust! Happy are we, brethren, if with the consciousness of all our weaknesses, our infirmities, and frailties, we can approach our Heavenly Father with the sure and certain hope that we are individually the objects of his care, the subjects of his ceaseless and unslumbering solicitude, the children of his love! For then, as Christ hath commanded us, (*Mark* x,) bringing our oblations of filial obedience, we shall learn that the Lord is full of compassion and mercy; long-suffering and of great goodness.

Ver. 15—19. After the pious admission that the Lord is merciful, because He remembereth of what frail and fading material He formed us, David naturally falls into that reflection which “comes home to every man’s business and bosom”—the consciousness of his own transient sojourn in this vale of tears; wherein he daily and hourly sees the emblems of his own

ever-changing condition springing up and vanishing from under his feet. But, as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. Though here the days of man are but as grass, yet is there an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for him in heaven. Though here he flourisheth only as a flower of the field, starting into life, and drooping and declining, until the place of his habitation shall know him no more; yet shall he bloom again in eternity; over his humbled head

The storms of wintry Time will quickly pass,
And one unbounded Spring encircle all;

and his spirit shall be nourished with the ever-falling dews of immortality, the heavenly manna, while reposing beneath the shadow of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. Our security for this bright reversion is the unchanging goodness of the Lord, which endureth for ever and ever upon them that fear Him; for He is ever mindful of his Covenant—that provision for our peace which has been ratified and confirmed in our sight, by the propitiatory sacrifice of his own co-equal and co-eternal Son. His prophetic view of this consummation filled the Psalmist with a grateful enthusiasm, to which he felt himself incapable of giving utterance: he therefore calls upon the angelic powers, who minister around the throne of Divine Glory, to re-echo his imperfect praise: he summons all the inferior agents of Jehovah's will to unite in choral harmony: but, finally, retires into himself, lest peradventure his own voice should be wanting in the universal strain: Praise thou the Lord, O my soul! [Read 20—22.]

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XL.

PSALM 104.

As this Psalm begins and ends with the same words as the preceding one, it is concluded to be the work of David; and as such, a continuous flow of his grateful adoration of the Almighty, prompted by his further meditations on the divine power, and wisdom, and goodness, as displayed in the creation, preservation, and administration of the universe. Throughout these sacred compositions the inspired writer seems to have been moved, in a greater or less degree, to the expression of his veneration and love towards his Creator, by a design to raise an eternal monument of his gratitude, which should equally tend to promote the glory of God and the common good of mankind. In this Psalm, therefore, which is appropriately used in our service on Whitsunday, the prophet, after his deep and earnest meditations, and moved thereto by the divine instinct, suddenly arouses his thoughts into action, and thus invokes the attention of every unborn generation to the glory, the wisdom, the goodness, and the power of Jehovah, in language of surpassing sweetness and dignity.

Ver. 1—5. The peculiar construction of these verses presents an imaginary scene, in which two actors are engaged: the man exhorting his soul to awake to the performance of its most gratifying duty: the soul upspringing at the call; and as if conscious of having too long slumbered in inactive meditation, impetuously pouring forth the suppressed eloquence of feeling, like a torrent of water suddenly bursting its bounds. The subjects of the soul's admiration are the divine attributes—those which are figuratively portrayed as the external and visible attributes of the Deity. God is a Spirit, though for the better instruction of our limited understanding, often spoken of as a Being of the form and fashion of a man. Here He is represented as a clothed person: but with ideal and unsubstantial garments, reflecting the glory, the majesty, and honour, of the One Supreme God. St. John, in his first general Epistle to

the Churches of Christ then established, has made known the message of the Gospel, (that which he and his fellow labourers had declared unto them,) to be, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. And to this passage the Psalmist's declaration corresponds:—Thou deckest Thyself with light, as with a garment; spreading out the heavens like a curtain; manifesting thy control over all the elements of nature, by the most stupendous of miracles, even the inconceivable mystery of making the very waters to support the beams of thine everlasting chambers; and laying the foundations of the earth so securely, that it shall never move; until by the same omnipotent Word that created them, the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. In the passing ages of the world's duration, however, the Lord Jehovah manifests his power and his presence to his intelligent creatures, (and we know not how far the brute creation may not be cognizant of some domination higher than that of man,)* by the instrumentality of the elements of Nature. Of this the Psalmist gives a poetical delineation, by representing the Almighty as making the clouds his chariot, and walking upon the wings of the wind. It is for them chiefly to witness the awful wonders of elementary strife, who go down to the sea in ships, and whose business is on the great waters; yet sometimes do these demonstrations of Almighty power appeal to the tenant of the quiet cottage, and to the flocks and herds reposing on their native pastures. Such has been once experienced by ourselves during the past memorable summer; † when thousands of human hearts were stricken with fearfulness and trembling, by the consciousness of their own frailty, and the awfulness of the visitation; while thousands of others, not less vulnerable, nor less obnoxious to the divine anger, were listening with even a subdued pleasure to the thunders of the chariot-

* Feedeth the young ravens that call upon Him. (*Ps.* 149.) † August 1, 1846.

wheels of their Creator, and calmly admiring the beauty of the illuminated heavens; when, it may be almost said, as in the provocations of Pharaoh, the fire ran along upon the ground. The most magnificent portion of this passage, though not perhaps the most imaginative, yet remains:—He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. The Almighty is every where represented as acting by subordinate instruments or agents. It is said that, when our Saviour was in the depth of his agonies in the garden, angels came and ministered unto Him. And we are elsewhere instructed to believe, (*Psalm xci.*) that angels are the appointed guardians of our safety, while we seek to dwell under the defence of the Most High; for He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. But they are also the administrators of his punishments, the executioners of his judgments; and therefore to the wicked a flaming fire; as is affirmed by the Apostle in the judgment of the great last day; when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. (*2 Thess. i.*)

. *Ver. 6—9.* The constant change of the grammatical persons so common throughout the Psalms, is nowhere more striking than in this; but, as before observed, it is in compliance with the peculiar idiom of the Hebrew language. In these verses, for example, the Almighty is spoken to; in other places, He is spoken of. Here is evidently an allusion to the Mosaic account of the creation, before which all was chaos, a rude and undistinguished mass of mingled matter, the earth being without form and void, and darkness resting upon the face of the deep, until God said, Let there be light! The Psalmist's account is a figurative paraphrase of the brief and simple record of the sacred historian. The son of Jesse, like the generality of highly gifted men, was an enthusiast upon every subject which harmonised with the feelings that were awakened by the motions

of his own genius. He saw and thought upon every thing under the influence of his poetic temperament: and here he analyses as it were, the body of the great fact recorded by Moses into its first principles—he gives us the details of the operation until it was perfected. All was at first covered with the deep as with a garment: even the hills were hidden beneath the waters; until these, aroused by the voice of Omnipotence, dispersed themselves in fear, disorderly hurrying to and fro, over plains and valleys alike; and arrested only by the word of their Creator, setting them the bounds which they should not pass, and appointing them their proper place in the creation. Such is the sublime character of these few verses; after which the Psalmist's mind subsides into the contemplation of the more quiet scenes of God's creative and providential dispensations.

Ver. 10—15. What a beautiful contrast do these verses present to our thoughts; merging as they do from the awful lights and shadows of the vast work of creative power, into the more peaceful tints of Nature's beauties, when perfected for the sole enjoyment of man; yet provident of all the wants, and ministering to all the delights, of which the lower orders of the animal creation are susceptible! I do not think there exists another picture of truthful descriptive beauty, wrought out in such pure simplicity of language. If I may so speak, there is not a superfluous touch of the artist's pencil discoverable in the entire composition; nor is any thing wanting in it which could add to the force of its appeal to the human heart, calling for its boundless gratitude to Him who hath given us all things richly to enjoy. The language itself must be contemplated before it can be appreciated, but when appreciated, it must be enjoyed. No comment is needed, none could throw any light upon that which has no obscurity; except that, as in this passage, the chief temporal blessings which the earth instrumentally provides for man, are ascribed to the fertilizing property of water, the springs that feed the rivers, the showers that descend upon the hills. A reflective writer has thus spiritualized the subject:—

“In the new creation there are wells of salvation, living springs, waters of comfort, of which all nations, even the most savage and barbarous, are invited to come and drink freely. They flow among the Churches, they descend into the hearts of the lowly, and they refresh us in our passage through the wilderness; for even there do waters break out, and streams in the desert.” (*Isa. xxxv, 6.*)—*Bishop Horne.*

Ver. 16—23. Herein also we see the Psalmist pursuing his dissection, so to speak, of the provisions of Nature for the shelter and sustenance of the wilder orders of the animal creation; completing his epitome of the providential dispensations of the Creator, in a brief review of man's allotted share in the universal economy—he goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening. How much of the history of human life, as it was designed to be employed by man's Creator, is contained in these few quiet words: quiet as they are, however, they are pregnant with a hidden import of instruction and reproof. It was the primal sentence that man should eat bread by the sweat of his brow: but how greatly does he add to his labour and sorrow, by his voluntary and habitual rebellion against the order of nature! How frequently does he double his toil, by devoting those hours which are claimed and given for rest and domestic recreation, to the clamorous calls of dissipation, to wasting the seasons of wholesome thought, and the squandering in rioting and drunkenness those means, which he has earned by honest labour, of sustaining his own strength, and of ministering to the happiness and welfare of those who are dependent upon him, and who ought to be dear to him! Volumes might be written, and hours might be consumed in preaching; but by the unwise the tavern will still be preferred to the Church and to the Bible. Yet, remember, brethren, it is God's inspired word—Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour *until* the evening. And as an illustration, the Psalmist reminds us that during the hours of darkness the beasts of the forest do move, seeking their meat from God;

and that when obtained by the appointed means and opportunities, they lay them down in their resting-places, more obedient to the laws of Nature than enlightened man, the lord of the creation! But, as Job exclaims, None saith, Where is God my Maker, who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven? (xxxv, 10, 11.)

Ver. 24—32. From the contemplation of these marvellous and minute dispensations of God's natural Providence, the Psalmist falls into the reflective mood, on the subject of the divine wisdom, and power, and goodness, manifested in these things; and thence again returning to the same subject, but surveying now the less obvious recipients of the universal bounteousness of the Creator; for having already shewn that the earth is full of his riches, the inhabitants of the great and wide sea also are made to pass in review before Him, from the huge Leviathan to the innumerable creeping things; all of which derive their sustenance and their enjoyments from the one inexhaustible source, which ministers to the wants and delights of man. He reminds us, too, that all are alike dependent on the same omnipotent will; for that it is only when the Almighty openeth his hand they are filled with good; when He hideth his face they are troubled; when He taketh away their breath they die, and are turned again to their dust: but that by the exercise of his re-creative power, He can infuse life into inanimate matter, and renew all things upon the face of the earth. Wherefore the Psalmist adoringly confesses to the eternity of the Divine Majesty, and the incomprehensible felicity of the divine mind, in contemplating the beneficent operations of divine power. Not unmindful, however, that that power exercised in wrath involves the present and everlasting safety of man, he reminds us of the terrors of the Lord; and with a backward glance at the display of those terrors which accompanied the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai, he warns us against the ungrateful provocation of the divine wrath: for then shall the whole earth tremble at the look of

Him ; if He do but touch the hills they shall smoke. Nevertheless, with that all-pervading faithfulness and humility, that child-like trust and submissiveness, which shone in the character of the son of Jesse, he thus proclaims his own resolve ; not in the spirit of fear, but of love :—

Ver. 33—35. If we were duly to estimate the gratuitous blessings which are poured upon us, even in this present life of labour and sorrow, which is our judicial inheritance, we should find more numerous and more frequent motives to praise than to prayer : and inasmuch as the one duty is more congenial to our nature, because more productive of joyfulness than the other ; by so much more should we neutralize the unavoidable ills of life, by nurturing within ourselves the power of endurance, or the courage needful for resistance. A cheerful reliance on the divine support, an habitual sense and acknowledgment of mercies and blessings bestowed on us from above, will operate as a charm against all imaginary evils, and as a medicine for the wounds inflicted by many real evils. The Psalmist here gives us a practical lesson in this branch of true wisdom, by his own example :—I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live : I will praise my God while I have my being. And so shall my words please Him : my joy shall be in the Lord ! And how impressive is the contrast which he draws between his own hopeful dependence upon the God of his salvation and the desperate condition of those who acknowledge not the works of the Lord, neither understand his counsel. For therefore they are sinners, outcasts from the divine care, who shall be consumed out of the earth, and hurled to and fro by the blasting of the breath of God's displeasure, till they come to a fearful end. And how impressive also is the instantaneous shrinking, as it were, from the contemplation of their wretchedness, to the renewed exhortation of his own soul to its continued allegiance to its Creator, Preserver and Benefactor ! Praise thou the Lord, O my soul ! Praise the Lord !

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XLI.

PSALM 105.

A small portion of this Psalm is given in the 16th chapter of the first book of Chronicles, as having been composed on the happy occasion of bringing the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord God of Israel, from the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite into the place which had been prepared for it in the City of David. The rest of this Psalm is a general exhortation to praise Jehovah, for the many wonders and signs He had wrought in behalf of his chosen people; and a long enumeration of those blessings, which are attributed by the Psalmist to God's faithfulness under the Covenant made with Abraham: and in the conclusion, reminding the people of Israel, that all these manifestations of the divine favour were designed to win their obedience to the statutes and laws of the One True God. The portion given in the Book of Chronicles extends from the 1st to the 15th verse, or about one third of the entire Psalm.

Ver. 1—15. Upon the joyful occasion to which I have referred, king David calls upon his people to render that thanksgiving which was due unto the Lord for having preserved to them the Ark in which his holy Covenant was deposited, through the long seasons of war and tumults, and journeyings, during which it had been exposed to heathen malice, and the unnatural enmity of his own people. And, my brethren, it is under the influence of no wild enthusiasm, but in a firm belief of the propriety of applying this subject to our own national experience, that I remind you of the preservation of our Christian privileges, through the many perils which have threatened them, from time to time, under the temporary triumphs of ungodly and rebellious men. The chief points in our national history, bearing upon this subject, are too well known to require enumeration at this time, if it were possible. Suffice it to say, that though we have not, like the Israelites of old, God's visible Presence among us, the glorious Shechinah which illuminated

their Tabernacle; be it remembered that we are the heirs of a better Covenant. The Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is a Covenant of Grace, teaching us that as God is a Spirit, we must worship in spirit and in truth; and that the religion of the Gospel is a purely spiritual religion; not consisting merely in sacrifices, ceremonials, and ordinances, which were but shadows of good things to come. We have also "the Testimony" in the pure Word of God; and we should rejoice that it has never been hidden from our view, except in some few brief seasons of our contest with the powers of darkness. The true ark in which the glorious Gospel of the ever-blessed God is guarded for our spiritual benefit, and for the illumination of the whole world, is our reformed and purified National Church. She has in former times nobly sustained her high character, by struggling against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places, for the preservation of her integrity: and for the maintenance of the Truth as it is in Jesus, in opposition to the idolatrous creeds and practices of Popery. In present times too, she has still to contend against the polluting innovations of schism in all its hideous varieties—for the name of her modern foe is Legion. Neither is the Ark itself altogether unpolluted by sacrilegious hands. Some even of her own ministering servants have lifted their heel against her, and have sought refuge from the shame attaching to their infamy, in the cells and cloisters of saint-worship and idol-worship. Here, however, the faithful stewards of the divine mysteries still call upon the humble disciples of the Lord to rejoice in His Holy Name: still bid the heart of them rejoice, that seek the Lord. For, like David, we must ascribe the peace and safety of our Zion to his loving-kindness towards us. It is to the marvellous works that He hath done for the preservation of the pure and undefiled ministration of Christ's religion in our Church, that she owes her existence, her safety, and her usefulness in her

labour of love for the salvation of the souls of her children. His wonders and the judgments of his mouth have hitherto been her shield and buckler against every adversary, Under the shadow of his wings she is still permitted, yea commanded to rejoice : for He hath been alway mindful of his covenant and promise that He made, even to a thousand generations. For remember, brethren, that though the words of the Psalmist have only a particular application to a specific covenant, even the covenant that God made with Abraham, saying, Unto you will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance; when they were yet but a few of them, and they strangers in the land:—remember, I say, how very truly these words apply to the first establishment of Christianity in a heathen world; for Jews and Gentiles were then equally chargeable with cherishing the sin of an evil heart, in estranging themselves from the living God. The Divine Founder of our holy religion was Himself despised and rejected of men. The few He called to be his fellow-labourers in the world's then barren and uncultivated vineyard, were men of the humblest rank and the most untutored minds; they, with their Divine Master, were persecuted on every side; yet in a few short years, under their Heaven-directed ministry, did the fulness of the Divine Spirit rest upon their labours; and the wilderness of the world became a fruitful field; and the fruitful field was counted for a forest; and the earth blossomed abundantly, and rejoiced with joy; until the desert became like the garden of the Lord. Thus do the words of the Psalmist apply to the Christianised world and her Church, the elect people of God. The covenant with Abraham consisted of two distinct parts: the promise of temporal blessings, designed exclusively for the immediate descendants of the Patriarch; and the promise of a kingdom of grace to all the posterity of Adam, who should obey the terms of the Covenant. I will bless thee, and will make thy name great: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Now

the generations from Abraham to Jesus Christ were but forty-two in number, whereas, as I have already quoted, the Psalmist affirms that God is alway mindful of the covenant and promise that He made, even to a thousand generations; that is, to an unlimited period. And when the fulness of time was come, the all-merciful covenant of grace began, as it were, to be carried out. The bearers of the glad tidings of the Gospel of salvation took possession in His Name of the lot of their Divine Master's inheritance; even while it was literally true that there were yet but a few of them, and they strangers in the land: and it is equally true, though not applicable to their temporal experience, that what time as they went from one nation to another; from one kingdom to another people; He suffered no man to do them wrong; but reprov'd even kings for their sake, in the language of divine authority—Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. We know, my brethren, that the lives of the greater number of the Evangelists and Apostles ended in martyrdom; but they were preserved for the work whereunto they were called; they experienced the fulness of the divine promise, that as their day was, so should be their strength; and they went on their way rejoicing in the anticipation of the assured reward. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. These were the founders of our Church; these were the chosen workmen appointed to build up the spiritual Temple upon that holy Foundation which they had seen by faith in the everlasting covenant of the Lord God—Behold, I lay in Sion a chief Corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth in Him shall not be confounded. Surely there can be needed no strong arguments to persuade you, my brethren, to rejoice in the privileges of such high communion; to apply them practically to the working out your own salvation; and in the sincerity of your Christian profession to seek the Lord and his strength, to seek his face evermore; under the grateful

consciousness, that in preserving the ark of his covenant among you, He has given you assurance of the continued means of grace, wherein is laid a good foundation for the hope of eternal glory.

Ver. 16—23. Almost the entire remaining portion of this Psalm consists of an enumeration of the wondrous works spoken of at the commencement. Yet every remaining verse touches upon some instructive history. Those which I have now read give a brief sketch of the experience, the labours, the services, the honours, of the purest and noblest human character ever held up for the example of mankind. We lately had occasion, while discussing the subjects of the 106th Psalm, to refer to the history of Israel's deliverance from their Egyptian bondage.* We come now to some of the circumstances preceding their long captivity, and the verses which follow are a brief epitome of its history as given in the Book of Exodus. The dearth here spoken of, was experienced in the land of Canaan, as well as in Egypt; but notwithstanding that the sentence of a four hundred years bondage was then suspended over the chosen people, the Almighty provided for their protection in the mean time, by sending a man before them into Egypt, who should prove their friend and preserver in the dreadful extremity of famine; even Joseph, who had been sold to be a bond-servant to the Egyptians; he thus presenting in his own person a type of the future condition of his whole nation. The history of Joseph forms the most beautiful personal narrative in the Old Testament. Israel loved his son Joseph above all his brethren, because he was the son of his old age: and therefore his brethren hated him, and they conspired against him, and would have slain him, but for the overruling Providence of God; who touched the heart of his brother Reuben with the compassionate desire of delivering Joseph out of their hands, and restoring

* These Lectures were all delivered in the Evening Services, and the Psalms therefore could not fall regularly.

him to his father again. Thus were the designs of the God of Israel promoted as well for the preservation of his chosen seed, as for their subsequent punishment. Joseph became a slave in the household of the Egyptian king; but his virtues and his wisdom procured him special notice, and consequent honours. The Psalmist tell us that until the time came that his cause was known, the word of the Lord tried him. He had been imprisoned, and chained, and fettered; until the iron entered into his soul. But when his innocency was established, his virtues found their reward. The king sent and delivered him: the prince of the people let him go free. He made him lord also of his house, and ruler of all his substance; that he might inform his princes, and teach his senators wisdom. His authority therefore in the first instance brought his father and his brethren into Egypt, and thus preserved them from starvation; and in the second place laid the foundation for that punishment of the entire people, which God had long before announced to Abram, for the rebellious spirit which he foresaw in the Patriarch's descendants. And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in the land that is not theirs, and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. It is a marvellous history, that of the Egyptian bondage, and of the Israelites' deliverance from it. In the verses which immediately follow, David records the wonders wrought by the Almighty, to enforce their freedom at his own appointed time.

Ver. 24—37. The whole of the circumstances here briefly related by the Psalmist, are minutely recorded in the first twelve chapters of Exodus: and it is worthy of remark, how greatly the bitterness of the people's bondage was increased by the stubbornness of Pharaoh, in detaining them against the evidence of all the mighty signs and wonders wrought in their behalf; and how these events tended at the same time to the

fulfilment of that threat, which the Almighty had made known to Abram:—And also that people whom they shall serve will I judge. For in the long period of their captivity, God had increased his people exceedingly, and made them stronger than their enemies. Yet it was not ordered that they should deliver themselves by their own strength. The Lord Jehovah had determined to shew his tokens among the Egyptians, and his wonders in the land of Ham. The heart of Pharaoh was judicially hardened under all the sufferings sustained equally by himself and his people. The very heavens were darkened over their land: evils till then unknown were sent upon their fields, their vineyards, their waters, their dwellings, their families; until it came to pass in one night, that at midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, to the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle. There was not a house where there was not one dead! Thus were the judgments of God dealt upon that nation of abominations, until the Egyptians were urgent upon the people whom they had so long enslaved, that they might escape out of the land in haste: for they said, we be all dead men. And in this manner are the words of the historian confirmed by the Psalmist: Egypt was glad at their departing, for they were afraid of them.

Ver. 38—44. In these verses, the Psalmist, after touching briefly upon the continued wonders wrought in behalf of the Israelites, subsequent to their departure out of Egypt, returns to the subjects of the thanksgiving with which he commences the Psalm. He first celebrates the faithfulness of God's promise to Abram, in favour of the unborn generations of his seed; and which has been already cited from the Book of Genesis. And he gives us to understand that it was for His Name's sake, and for His Word's sake, and not for any deservings of their own, that God wrought their deliverance, and

brought them out of Egypt with great substance, and established them in great power. He remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant; and (therefore) He brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness; and gave them the lands of the heathen, and they took the labours of the people in possession. And moreover the Psalmist reminds us, that the all-wise purpose extended far beyond the mere fulfilment of God's promise to Abram. He did not bestow his favours upon the Israelites only to make good his word, but with the design also of withdrawing their hearts from the abominations of idolatry, with which they had been so long familiar: and drawing them towards Himself with the cords of love, that they might become his faithful people, keeping his statutes, and observing his laws. And such, brethren, is the merciful design in all the dealings of our Heavenly Father towards *us*. We have sinned, and come short of all deserving at his hands; and therefore are we given over occasionally to the tyranny of our spiritual foe, to be kept by him, the Pharaoh of the kingdom of darkness, in bondage to sin, and the elements of the world. But there is an imperishable promise in behalf of us, registered in the volume of the Book of God, that when the time of banishment and bondage shall have passed away, the faithful shall triumph in eternal freedom—Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people; and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away!

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XLII.

PSALM 106.

It may be surmised from the concluding verses of this Psalm, that it was designed as a Lamentation over the sins and the sufferings of Israel, during some period of their captivity or dispersion. But though it is chiefly taken up in enumerating the provocations of divine anger and punishment, by the people, there is throughout, the spirit of prayer implied or expressed. For while the thoughts of the Psalmist's heart dwelt upon the many offences of the Israelites against their God, he felt the necessity of earnest supplications in their behalf;—and that upon himself, as their priest, their prophet, and their king, devolved the weighty duties of an intercessor with the Lord Jehovah, his King and his God. The Psalm begins with an exhortation to praise; and as an inducement to this pleasing duty, it proclaims the felicity of the faithful and obedient.

Ver. 1—5. The goodness of the Lord towards the entire family of mankind is here, as almost every where throughout the Book of Psalms, the burthen or chorus of these sacred effusions of the heart. Upon the divine forbearance in the times of provocation, the king of Israel had accustomed himself to repose: upon the gracious bounties of his God, in the seasons of peace and prosperity, it was his highest enjoyment to reflect, and gratefully to acknowledge them. And he here humbly admits his own insufficiency for these things—Who can express the noble acts of the Lord, and shew forth all his praise? This consideration is not, however, to deter the humblest member of the Church of Christ from approaching the footstool of Divine Mercy with his sacrifices, whether of prayer or of praise. For God's love extends to all his faithful servants—He is slow to anger, and of great kindness—and his delights are with the children of men. Although in the fourth and fifth verses the Psalmist speaks in his own name—Remember me, O Lord—his prayer is for the whole people, that they may be turned from their sins, and be made partakers of

the blessedness of the just, and be found always prepared, with willing hearts to give thanks for the loving-kindness of the Lord; that they may be, and are, partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Ver. 6—8. We have sinned, as well as they who have gone before us. To this confession he was led by remembering the disobedience of the Israelites, when they were so marvellously delivered from the Egyptian bondage, and conducted through the wilderness, and sustained with angels' food, where none else could be found; when, hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them; when, in obedience to the rod of Moses, the solid rock gushed out the refreshing draught; and gave proof that the Lord God of Israel is the God of universal nature, all things being in subjection to his will; and all things being available for the good of his creatures in their hour of need. But their offence was, that they regarded not his wonders, neither kept they his great goodness in remembrance. We find, however, that almost all the Old Testament promises are given with that reservation which confirms the declaration of the second commandment, that the Lord Jehovah is a jealous God. And the Psalmist here admits that the Almighty helped the children of Israel for his Name's sake; that He might make his power to be known. We have not, my brethren, these manifestations of God's presence, and of his care for us; but few of us, if our hearts are not hardened by unbelief, can refrain from acknowledging that in many extremities the hand of God has delivered our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling; though we are too apt to ascribe our deliverances from sickness, or from perils, or from untimely death, either to chance, or to human means, or to the common course of events.

Ver. 9—15. The history of the final deliverance of the Israelites from Pharaoh and his host at the Red Sea is too well known to need repeating. And it was too signal a proof of Divine protection to be at once forgotten by that murmuring

people; for then believed they in God, and sang praises unto Him. Brief, however, were their gratitude and their obedience; for they soon forgot his works, and would not abide his counsel. They grew tired of the food by which they had been so marvellously sustained, they lusted after meat, and they dared to mock God with their foolish upbraidings—He smote the stony rock indeed, so that the waters gushed out: but can he provide flesh for his people? Yes, He gave them their desire, but it was the gift of his wrath: He sent them quails from heaven; and they rioted in this luxury till their surfeit brought disease, and disease brought death to many thousands; and the place whereat they were buried is called Kibroth-hattaavah, that is, the graves of lust. And many a one in many generations have fallen victims to their ungovernable appetite, their insatiable covetousness, or their boundless pride. The Lord gave them their heart's desire, and sent leanness withal into their souls.

Ver. 16—18. Never, my brethren, upon proper occasions, that is, when my subject led me to it—never have I refrained from reproof of the sin of Dissent. Hear now what a venerable Commentator, once the Bishop of this Diocese,* has left upon record as his own reflection on this portion of the Psalm. "Moses and Aaron (says he) were the divinely appointed governors of Israel, in Church and state. Envy and ambition led Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, to accuse the former of tyranny, and the latter of priestcraft. Jehovah was appealed to, a day was appointed, and a decision made. One body of the malcontents went down alive into the pit: another was consumed by fire from heaven. Let schismatics and rebels beware of that pit which is bottomless, and of that fire which shall never be quenched!"

Ver. 19—22. Here is an example of the ease with which mankind fall from smaller to greater sins. They who had seen with their eyes the wondrous works of the Lord God

* Norwich.

Omnipotent, and in whose special favour these works had been wrought; even they fell from discontent, and from rebellion against the authority of God's anointed servants, into the deeper sin of idolatry, the worship of a molten image; and that, the image of a calf, an animal which we place in the lowest rank of unintelligent creatures. And moreover, when we reflect, that the Israelites adopted this image from the example of their Egyptian oppressors, on whom they had seen the divine vengeance so wonderfully manifested in their own behalf at the Red Sea; we must want words to express our astonishment at the infatuation of their guilt. It is useful, however, as a lesson to all succeeding generations. We have all known, or heard, or read of some in our day, who having begun life by what are called small offences against the laws of their country, have advanced step by step, from sin to sin, until they have been condemned for the deepest guilt, the shedding of human blood, to forfeit their lives on the scaffold. Such is the power of Satan over those who have once yielded to his temptations, in defiance of their own conscience, and in the violation of those wholesome precepts which are, more or less, the blessed inheritance of all those who have the privilege of being the natives of a Christian land.

Ver. 23—25. We are told in the New Testament, that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. A brighter character than Moses never yet adorned the earth. He was selected from among mankind by God Himself, to restore to his chosen people that inheritance which He had designed for them from the foundation of the world; and he was endued with all those great moral faculties which fitted him for the heavy task. But his patriotism was second only to his piety: and to that quality the Psalmist alludes in the first of these verses, the display of which is recorded in the 32nd chapter of Exodus. And Moses saith unto the Lord, Oh! this people have sinned a great sin, and made them gods of gold. Yet

now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin.....! If not, I pray Thee, blot *me* out of the book which Thou hast written! He was willing to die with or for his people, if their sin was unpardonable. Here is one of those proofs of the deep piety of Moses, which made him considered a type of the Saviour, who should offer Himself a willing Sacrifice for the sins of all mankind.

Ver. 26—29. The present state of the Jews is a wonderful evidence of the fulfilment of this sentence. They are, and ever have been, from before the days of our Saviour, scattered among the nations, a despised and persecuted people; merely tolerated in various countries, either through the charity of Christians, or to serve the heathen nations in their occasional necessities, by means of that wealth which it is still the characteristic of the Jewish people to possess the peculiar power of gathering faster than others. And this probably is, in the eye of Jehovah, the offensive relic of their idolatry at this day, for though they do not, like their rebellious forefathers, join themselves unto Baal Peor, or any other visible object of heathen worship; yet still is the plague of God's continued displeasure great among them.

Ver. 30, 31. It appears from the sacred historians, that 24,000 persons had already been swept off by this awful visitation; which was at length stayed by the zealous execution of the law, and by the earnest prayers of Phinehas the grandson of Aaron; who slew Zimri and Cosbi in the act of an adulterous pollution at that fearful season of worship, when all the congregation of the people were weeping before the door of the Tabernacle. For this act of pious zeal Phinehas obtained immediately from God the covenant of an everlasting priesthood. His prayers only are noticed in these verses of the Psalm: but they were accepted and answered, and so the plague was stayed.

Ver. 32—38. The event alluded to in the first of these verses, took place in point of time, earlier than the plague just

now referred to. The Israelites had upbraided Moses and Aaron for having brought them unto a place where they were famishing for want of water—a severe trial enough for mere human nature—but instead of praying to the Giver of all good for that which they needed, or instead of imploring their pious leader to intercede with God for them, they insulted him with reproaches: Would God we had died when our brethren died! Wherefore have ye made us to come out of Egypt, to bring us into this evil place? The Psalmist tells us merely that Moses was angered: but in the history of the transaction, as given in the 20th chapter of Numbers, we see that even he, Moses the man of God, sinned in his anger, and displeased the Almighty, so that He punished Moses for their sakes. He gathered the congregation together, and thus, without appealing to his God, thus addressed them—Hear now, ye rebels! must *we* fetch you water out of the rock? And so saying, he violently smote the rock twice with his rod. As much, probably, to the astonishment of Moses and Aaron as to that of the people, the water came out abundantly, and the people drank; they and their cattle. But the Lord rebuked Moses because he believed not, and neglected to sanctify Him before the people: and for this cause was he condemned to die before the Israelites should inherit the good land which the Lord had promised them. Yet it must seem to us, that the spirit of Moses had not been lightly provoked; for they continued in their idolatry, they were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works: and went so far in their servile imitation of their blind neighbours, that they sacrificed human beings to their idols, and even offered their sons and their daughters unto devils, until the land was defiled with blood. The Lord Jehovah will, however, reserve to himself the punishment of national sins. He gives not over this power to human judges and magistrates; though He sometimes uses them as the instruments of his justice.

Ver. 39—42. We cannot wonder that even the meekest of

men, as Moses is called, should for once have given way to ungovernable anger, when we read of the continual provocations of the people whom he had led amid signs and wonders, unknown before and since, through so many dangers and difficulties. For we see that even all-perfect Mercy could not (if we may so speak) withstand the claims of Justice for ever! The divine wrath was so far kindled, that the Lord abhorred his own inheritance—his own chosen people. But He gave them not over, as at other times, to plague, or famine, or pestilence; for He appointed their heathen enemies to be the ministers of his vengeance—the very persons who had corrupted their morals, and rooted out their religious principles. How often must they have groaned in their spirit, under the consciousness that this punishment had been awarded by that Omnipotent Being, whose goodness they had scorned, whose honour they had so often insulted, and whose anger they had provoked by perpetual disobedience!

Ver. 43, 44. Compassion is undoubtedly the all-prevailing attribute in the Divine Character. All the Old Testament histories bear witness to this truth. It is however in the later dispensation of the Gospel that we obtain the fullest and the clearest view of this perfection. Man had sinned from the beginning; but from the beginning also had God provided a remedy, which no future provocations of his creatures should deprive of its efficacy. He gave to mankind, by promise from the moment of their transgression, a Redeemer, mighty to save, an Intercessor, before whose all-powerful pleadings the upraised sword of Justice should fall harmless from the grasp of the offended Judge. He gave his only-begotten Son to be the Propitiation for our sins; and as if to deprive us of every plea for imitating the murmurings, and doubtings, and disbelief of Israel of old, the co-equal Son of the Father took our nature upon Him, became flesh, and dwelt among us, that we might behold the Godhead manifest in our flesh; that seeing we

might believe in Him; that believing we might live through Him. Here, my brethren, is a greater miracle than any vouchsafed exclusively to the offending Israelites: greater than their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage; greater than their sustenance in the desert by angels' food and quails from heaven; greater than the dividing of the Red Sea, and the overwhelming of Pharaoh and all his host; greater than their conquering seven nations, mightier and more numerous than themselves: and greater, and more merited will be our final punishment than that of the Jews themselves in the last day, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and has been confirmed to us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.

Ver. 45, 46. The Psalmist sums up his reflections here, as often elsewhere, with prayer and thanksgiving. And a bright example is his to the Christian disciple, that in all his works, begun, continued, and ended in the fear and love of God, he should glorify His Holy Name. Nor does his prayer close without a brief exhortation to this effect; for while in the warmth of a devotional spirit he supplicates for himself and his people that deliverance from the tyrannous power and the blighting influence of heathen example, which he saw to be so desirable for the welfare of Israel; his language implies the hope, that such a renewed manifestation of divine favour may induce the people to give thanks unto God's Holy Name, and to make their boast of his praise. Such is the duty of Christians in all their extremities, whether of sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity. Then, whether their prayers be answered, or their patience yet tried by Him who chasteneth us in love, the language of their hearts will be that of the devout king of Israel—Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting, and world without end. And let all the people say, Amen.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XLIII.

PSALM 107.

This Psalm is generally supposed by the best authorities to have been written in grateful commemoration of Israel's deliverance from captivity, whether that of Egypt or of Babylon; possibly at some period subsequent to both; since the description of suffering and of final freedom is equally applicable to and after each case. It would seem also as designed for use in public worship, as one verse is repeated four times, and probably formed the chorus, in which the entire congregation joined. The Psalm concludes, however, with a general exhortation to keep in remembrance those evidences which all men, more or less, have seen of the Divine Goodness; and promising that this grateful acknowledgment shall prove to them a means of grace.

Ver. 1—8. If the stiff-necked and rebellious tribes of Israel might be called upon to give thanks unto the Lord for temporal mercies vouchsafed to them; how much stronger reason have we, the descendants of the Gentile nations, whom the Jews of old held in so great abhorrence,—how much stronger reason have we, whom the Lord hath redeemed from spiritual bondage, to acknowledge that He is gracious, and that His mercy endureth for ever! For we are they who are redeemed and delivered from the hand of the great enemy of human peace; whose malice embraces our everlasting destruction; whose power is unlimited but by the interposing arm of Omnipotence, directed by inexhaustible and unconquerable love. The experience of the Israelites was but the shadow of the good things to be wrought in our behalf. For, as our Lord told the unbelieving Jews of his day, Many shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God—and you yourselves shall be thrust out: so was their experience but a type of the more enduring salvation decreed from everlasting for the heirs

of that glory revealed to us by Messiah Himself, the Son of God, the Great Captain of that salvation. By Him alone are we conducted through the waste howling wilderness of this world, as the Israelites were by the hand of Moses and Aaron. Here, without his guidance, we go astray, finding no abiding city to dwell in, no rest for the sole of our foot. Hungering and thirsting, though too seldom after righteousness, our soul would faint in us, but for his sustaining power. The Holy Spirit, however, the Divine Comforter whom He promised to send to his faithful followers, is ever at hand to help our infirmities, when we cry unto God in our trouble; and is ever able and willing to deliver our souls in the time of their distress, when trouble and anguish come upon them, and the fear of everlasting death shall overwhelm them. Seldom, however, is that wholesome fear impressed on our souls, unless by some temporal affliction, which bows the stubborn pride of our nature to the earth; when we are constrained to feel that all here is vanity and vexation of spirit; when we are taught to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and to acknowledge that He chasteneth us in love: for that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, tend only to work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; that these are his messengers that feelingly persuade us what we are; and that by the supervening grace of God they shall finally lead us forth by the right way, that we might reach the city of refuge, the new Jerusalem, the city of the Living God, where are the spirits of the just already made perfect through suffering; where is the assembly and church of the first-born that are written in Heaven; where dwell an innumerable company of angels, chaunting their native hallelujahs around the throne of God and of the Lamb for ever! O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness; and for the wonders that He doeth for the children of men!

Ver. 9—15. Our Saviour hath taught us the blessedness of

those who hunger and thirst after righteousness; for, as He promises, they shall be filled. And we may here understand the Psalmist as figuratively applying the same language to the pious Israelites, who had propitiated the divine love by seeking those things that belong to our peace; had tasted that the Lord is gracious; and had been filled and satisfied with his goodness. He then compares the state of these with such as still sit in darkness and the shadow of death, anticipating the approach of the king of terrors; and even in the darkness with which their fears surround them, and in the confusion of their distracted imaginations, fancying his approach among the coming events which cast their shadows before. Their spirits were dejected, through the prevailing dread of not only present suffering, but of approaching and undefined horrors: their faculties were paralyzed, being fast bound in misery and iron—the chains inflicted by the consciousness of their own iniquities: for they had rebelled against the word of the Lord, and lightly regarded the counsel of the Most Highest. Nevertheless, it was the Lord's doing: He in mercy scourged them with the rod of chastisement, to bring them back unto Himself: for the Psalmist describes in very natural terms the progress of their spiritual disease, and the medicinal course prescribed by the great Physician of souls for their recovery: He brought down their heart in heaviness; they fell down, and there was none to help them. None but He who had inflicted their wounds could administer the balm—He alone could rebuke the angry billows of his own wrath, and say to the terrified conscience, Peace, be still! They had been holden by the cords of their sins; but, as Jehovah had proclaimed by his prophet Hosea, When Israel was a child (a froward child,) I loved him: I taught Ephraim also, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to de-

stroy: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee. So, continues the Psalmist, when they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, He delivered them out of their distress: for He brought them out of darkness, and out of the shadow of death, and brake their bonds in sunder. I think, my brethren, that both in the histories of the Old Testament and in the doctrines of the New, it is equally manifested that our Heavenly Father is a God of love; and that if the sinner will repent, and do works meet for repentance; if the wicked man will turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, while it is called to-day, while it is yet the accepted time; the loving-kindness of the Lord is no more shut against him than against the just person who, comparatively, needs no repentance. Yet all are sinners to a greater or less degree; and all have equal need of the great purifying Sacrifice which was especially offered and accepted to take away the sins of the whole human race: for without the shedding of Christ's most precious blood, there had been no remission of sin. O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and for the wonders that He doeth for the children of men!

Ver. 16—21. This portion is partly descriptive of the power of the Almighty, as displayed in Israel's deliverances; partly of the blindness, wilfulness, and obstinacy, which had invoked upon their heads the divine anger and consequent punishment; and partly of the penitent state into which they had been thus brought, and which was followed by the Lord's returning mercy. The first and last verses of the portion, that is to say, the 16th and 20th, shew this to be the result of their humiliation and prayer. But the chief purport of the passage is to prove, that their iniquities had imposed upon them a sore burthen too heavy for them to bear. They were plagued for their offences, and because of their wickedness. The entire history of this people is made up of their daring provocations of the Almighty, as if in defiance of his power; and of the wonderful forbearance displayed towards them, under the re-

petition and continuance of their mad rebellions. Whereas, the very periods of their captivity were manifestations of mercy: they were the means of their preservation as a people; and as a people they were preserved to carry out and to establish the purposes of the Most High, as fixed in his everlasting counsels. For the order of the divine government of the human race, and of all their transactions, is no less fixed and sure, than that of the elements of which this material globe is formed. We occasionally see these elements in a state of violent agitation and uproar; yet it cannot be doubted that they are directed by his will, that their violence tends to the order and well-being of the universe, and that they are dispensed in mercy to our entire race; fire and hail, snow and vapours, wind and storm, fulfilling His Word. So with the children of men; the rational, the immortal, the redeemed portion of animated creation. In all the records preserved of our race, we see the turbulence of its corrupted nature ever and anon in full exercise, whether in masses, or in individual examples. These are permitted for beneficent ends, albeit they are the immediate fruits of our evil passions; unrestrained and let loose for a season, to work out all manner of moral and social uncleanness with greediness. But we are warned that though it must needs be, that offences come; there is the impending day of righteous retribution, wherein shall be dealt forth woe, unto every one by whom the offence cometh. This sentence is in mercy frequently executed in time, that the offender may escape the awful penalties of divine wrath reserved for eternity. This forbearance was the experience of the Israelites in the times of their captivity: they were persecuted for their correction, but not forsaken; they were cast down for their iniquities, but not destroyed: they suffered every indignity and every cruel infliction which their savage tyrants could invent, that fell short of depriving themselves of the labours of their captives, until these would have preferred starvation to slavery, had not the strong claims of nature proved stronger than their own desponding will: for

their soul abhorred all manner of meat; and they were even hard at death's door. But, as it is here repeated for the third time, they cried unto the Lord in their trouble. The mercy they sought was vouchsafed unto them. He sent his word, and healed them: they were saved from destruction. O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness; and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men! that they would offer unto Him the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and tell out his works with gladness!

Ver. 22—32. In this portion of the Psalm, the description which is given of the dangers and deliverances experienced by mariners, is a simile, in which we may plainly discern our common condition in passing the waves of this troublesome world. Our temporal life is a ship in which we are all embarked, as on a troubled sea: here are storms in which we are all frequently overtaken: there is a haven which we all desire to behold, and to enter. Temptations, persecutions, and afflictions, are the waves against which we have to contend. Stormy winds will arise, and we are apt to roar against them, in the very disquietude of our hearts. But it is for our correction that God permitteth us to be thus assaulted and tried. Our experience in life often bears a strong resemblance to that of the mariner. The succession and the violence of our troubles; the risings and sinkings of the mind and fortune; the uncertainty of our plans to improve our condition; and our utter inability to help ourselves, are finely represented by the multitude and impetuosity of the waves, the tossings and agitations of the vessel, the confusion, terror, and distress of the mariners. They are represented as flying to that remedy which they had never sought before: they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and are delivered out of their distress. Here is a lesson for all. When in this transitory life we are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity; nay,

In ev'ry storm that either frowns or falls;
What an asylum has the soul in prayer!

For then will the God of our salvation arise and rebuke the instruments of his passing anger. There is a mystic virtue in the repentant cry, Lord, save us! we perish! which fails not to awaken his love. Neither is there any spiritual evil, out of which God is not both able and willing to deliver us, when we call upon Him. Certainly, the mind of man cannot have a nobler subject for meditation in this world, than the wonders of Providence, considered as representing the mercies of redemption.* O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men! That they would exalt Him also in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the seat of the elders!

Ver. 33—41. In this conclusion of the Psalm is shewn how the Almighty at his pleasure, changes the order of nature's operations, on the one hand for the punishment of evil doers; on the other for the comfortless troubles' sake of the needy, and the deep sighing of the poor in spirit, when they call upon Him in the hour of affliction. For, for the wickedness of such as by his Providence are placed in a fruitful land, abounding with his gifts, He bringeth upon it barrenness and drought; as exemplified by the Prophet Isaiah in the complainings of the Church, the apostate Church of God in Zion:—There is none that calleth upon Thy Name, that stirreth up himself to take hold upon Thee. (Therefore) thy holy cities are a wilderness; Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised Thee, is burned up with fire, and all our pleasant things are laid waste! And the same prophet, in a similar strain of commemoration of God's dealings with his creatures, dwells upon the blessedness attendant on faithfulness and obedience to his laws:—Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath eye seen, what He hath prepared for him

* For much of this passage the reader is referred to *Bp. Horne's Commentary*.

that waiteth for Him. Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness; those that remember Thee in thy ways. As did the Prophet, so does the Psalmist, refer chiefly to general or national guilt and righteousness—the punishment of the one, the restoration of the other from temporal suffering. Where the wilderness was, there is standing water; the dry ground is fertilized with water-springs, that they may cultivate the land, and enjoy the fruits of its increase; multiplying their households and their possessions. For though they should share in the vicissitudes of life, its changes and chances; so that they are brought low, through oppression, through any plague or trouble; though He subject them for a season to the ill treatment of tyrants, who drive them from their peaceful homes, and compel them to wander in the wilderness; yet will He not utterly forsake them: He will restore them from their misery, will bless their renewed labours, and will enrich them with his choicest bounties. He will make them households like flocks of sheep. The Psalmist's reflection and exhortation upon these evidences of divine love, in behalf of the faithful seed of Abraham, might furnish the subject of a long discourse, appealing to the understanding and the experience of Christian professors; whether faithful or unfaithful to their profession. For all are alike subject to the dispensations of his Providence; all have equal need of the sustaining influences of Divine Grace, in their pilgrimage through this valley of the shadow of death. Yet need they fear no evil, if their hearts be fixed, trusting in the Lord: for even in their passing afflictions they may strengthen their spirits with the confidence of holy Job:—Happy is the man whom God correcteth: for He maketh sore and bindeth up; He woundeth, and his hands make whole: He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. [Read 42, 43.]

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XLIV.

PSALM 108.

As this Psalm is made up of parts of two others, the 57th and 60th, which fall in their regular course in these Lectures, it is unnecessary to enlarge upon it here. Whatever may have been the motive to this repetition, cannot now be decided; and conjecture seldom leads to edification.

PSALM 109.

A large portion of this Psalm consists of language which appears to be imprecations of vengeance upon the heads of enemies; but this would be an interpretation which the character of David scarcely justifies: for charity, though it be peculiarly a Christian grace, is a portion of our nature—a remnant of the Divine Image originally stamped upon it. Many of the Fathers of the primitive Church, i.e. of the earliest ages of Christianity, have applied this portion of the Psalm as predictions of the fate of the betrayers and murderers of our Saviour. In this light we may therefore view the severe imprecations it contains, whether they apply to the enemies of David or the enemies of Christ. They are only predictive of the evils that impend over the heads of the wicked in general; a fate which was denounced by the Levites, at the command of Moses, as a standing curse on the children of disobedience. I refer you to the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy for private reading and meditation.

Ver. 1—4. The Psalm opens with an appeal to the Searcher of hearts against an ungodly and deceitful enemy, supposed to be Doëg; who at the command of Saul had slain 85 priests, and made a forcible entry into Nob, the city of the priests; and put to the sword both men and women, children and sucklings, upon the suspicion that they had favoured the escape of David from the insane vengeance of Saul. This circumstance furnishes the first parallel to the history of our Saviour's time, when the wicked Herod commanded the slaughter of all the children at Bethlehem, in the vain hope of destroying the

infant Jesus. The Psalmist speaks of his enemy in the plural number, as many; for as Doëg the Edomite had his helpers in the destruction of the families of the priests, there can be no doubt he had his fellow conspirators in slandering the innocent son of Jesse; who spoke against him with false tongues, who compassed him about with words of hatred, and fought against him without a cause. But David sought refuge from all the foes by whom he was surrounded, in that never-failing source of comfort to those whose conscience condemns them not:—I give myself unto prayer; though they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my good will. And, depend upon it, my brethren, that in all cases of conscious integrity and innocence of an imputed fault, the silent prayer of the heart will pierce the gates of heaven, before the clamour of a thousand slanderous tongues can rise beyond the scenes of discord which gave it birth.

Ver. 5—14. These sentences, which appear to be so many imprecations of divine vengeance on the heads of his enemies, have not the same character in the Hebrew language, from which they are translated. There, the grammatical mode indicates only a prediction of what shall befall the evil doers; and not, as in our translation, a prayer for their extreme punishment. This is in no case the kind of prayer which we may offer at the footstool of divine justice; nor is it that which David was likely to have put up, when he said, I give myself unto prayer. The whole passage, therefore, must be understood as predictive, that is, as foretelling in his perfect confidence of the unchangeable justice of God, what shall be the fate of his godless enemies. Instead of reading, Let his days be few; Let his children be fatherless, begging their bread, and seeking it even out of desolate places;—the true sense is, It *shall* be so and so. In another view of the matter, the style of imprecation might have been deemed justifiable under the Law, that is, the legal dispensation; though it is not so under that holier

dispensation of the Gospel, which is given as the rule of our life and conduct. The view of the matter which I now refer to is, that (as many commentators admit) the whole of these sentences being applied in the singular number, or as to one person, the impious and treacherous Doëg is the subject of them. And if we briefly touch upon the history of his conduct, we shall see that David had ample reason, if not justification, for imprecating upon the head of the false Edomite, a return of the cursing in which, as it is said in a subsequent verse of the Psalm, this Doëg found a wicked delight. It appears in the short history of this man's conduct given in the first book of Samuel, that he was chief herdsman to king Saul; and that while David was much straightened during the time of his persecution, he came to Nob, the city of the priests, to ask of one of them some provision for his pressing necessity; in short, to beg bread. His request was granted: but it happened that Doëg was at the time present in the priest's house, detained, as the story relates, before the Lord; that is, we may suppose, engaged in some shew of religious duty. But the use he made of this occasion was immediately to apprise Saul of David's whereabouts, and to inform against the priest who had kindly succoured him. Whereupon Saul summoned all the priests of the city to appear before him, to the number of 86; and after charging them as traitors, in his wrath commanded his servants to slay them before his face. The servants, however, refused to put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the Lord. But Doëg no sooner received the word of command, than he fell upon them and slew them, one only of the whole number escaping. He then, as I have before stated, attacked their defenceless city, and slaughtered men and women, children and sucklings, with the edge of the sword. Now it was necessary to place before you this brief history, in order to arrive at a just judgment of the strong language of David in this Psalm, supposing it to be applied personally to the treacherous Doëg,

and taking the terms in which it stands in our Prayer Book translation. There is moreover a remarkable passage at the close of the history I have given you. The name of the priest who escaped the general slaughter was Abiathar. He immediately fled to David, who had taken shelter in the forest of Hareth, in the land of Judah, and shewed him that Saul had slain the Lord's priests. Now revenge was not the first thought of David's heart; but the humble and painful consciousness, that himself had been the innocent cause of all this calamitous suffering: for he said unto Abiathar, I knew it that day, when Doëg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. *I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house. Abide with me: fear not; for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard.* We know, brethren, how hard it is to suppress the feeling of indignation, and the desire of revenge, when any flagrant act of cruelty or injustice comes to our knowledge; and how much harder still, if we ourselves are the sufferers, perhaps the victims. Now David knew, that all this dreadful sacrifice of human life and happiness was the work of the Edomite's malice, and that probably this malice would have been more fully gratified, if the poor persecuted son of Jesse himself had been its victim. How then may it be expected that the Psalmist should have restrained his language within the bounds of moderation, when reflecting upon the murderous deeds of his foe? He felt, moreover, a stronger sympathy with the sacred persons of the priesthood, than any other man in Israel: for he knew they were the bulwarks of his country's peace; they were the chosen band to whom the Lord had consigned the instrumental custody of the Ark of his Covenant with his people; they were the watch-towers of the hill of Zion, which the Lord loved. Allowing, then, to the Psalmist's imprecations, the full force in which they stand before us, may we not in his defence make use of his own words, when he was about to encounter the Giant of

Gath?—Is there not a cause? I will no further pursue a matter which has been the subject of much discussion among the controversial writers and preachers.* There is a moral appended to it, which may prove far more edifying to ourselves. There is in our common nature a proneness to evil; and that evil manifests itself equally under either provocation or temptation. But the antidote to its domination over us is to be found in the pure precepts of our holy religion. Every rule there laid down for our guidance, is intended to neutralize the power of evil within us, and to paralyse that of the enemy without. Let me lay before you a few of those which bear upon the subject immediately in hand. It is one of the most prominent, and ought to be one of the most impressive doctrines of the Gospel, that all men are brethren; and from this doctrine, as from a root, branch forth many of the duties of our social state. That which perhaps we may consider in the very lowest range of moral offences, is nevertheless denounced with some severity by our Saviour Himself, in his Sermon on the Mount: Ye have been taught of old time, Thou shalt not kill: but I say unto you, whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment. This however is but the first step towards Christian perfection in this matter: by the same high authority we are commanded not only to avoid offending, but to forgive offences. After having in a parable described a wicked and unforgiving servant as delivered over to the tormentors; so likewise, said He, shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. And the Apostle's exhortation forms the third and last step in the summary of our Christian duty under this head: Beloved, avenge not yourselves; but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine: I will repay it, saith the Lord. And the advice of St. James, and the declaration which follows it, are

* See note, page 8.

conclusive upon the subject:—Let every man be slow to wrath; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. No—and there is every indication in this Psalm, that to the just judgment of God, David intended to commit the offending brother, in the full assurance that he would not escape the recompense he deserved; though the Psalmist himself desired not to be the administrator of that recompense.

Ver. 15—19. Here we see on what a good foundation the Psalmist's abhorrence rests. Doëg was a person of malignant spirit, and of profane manners: a persecutor of his brethren, and a blasphemer of God. To such a mind as David's, imbued as it was with the most fervid piety, and illuminated, and therefore purified, with the gifts of poesy and prophecy, such a character must have presented itself in the most disgusting colours. In these verses, however, it will be seen that the mode of speaking is changed, which will explain what I have already said upon that point. The Psalmist resorts first to one mode of speech, then to the other:—His delight was in cursing, and it *shall* happen unto him: he loved not blessing, therefore it *shall* be far from him. He clothed himself with cursing, like as with a raiment: and it *shall* come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. This is plainly nothing more than a prediction of what shall be the wicked man's recompense. It is in the same sense, therefore, that we must read the verses which follow:—His love of cursing shall be unto him as the cloke which he hath upon him, and as the girdle that he is alway girded withal. Thus shall it happen from the Lord unto mine enemies, and to those that speak evil against my soul. This then is the language of trust in God, and not of revengeful imprecation.

Ver. 20—30. The remainder of this Psalm consists chiefly of prayer and complaint, with some admixture of thoughts upon the reward that awaits his enemies. The extremity to which David was reduced, as a fugitive hunted by Saul and

his numerous followers, necessarily left him without hope in the help of man. We have seen how dearly the priests and people of Nob suffered for shewing him a simple act of kindness; and that the warm-hearted son of Jesse reproached himself as the cause (though innocently) of their slaughter. And can we be surprised, that under the all-pervading piety of his soul he should place his reliance only on the divine arm, both for his own protection and for the punishment of his foes? Deal Thou with me, O Lord, according unto thy Name! O deliver me, for I am helpless and poor; and my heart is wounded within me! Here is an evidence of feeling, something beyond that of selfish fear. His heart was wounded by the reflection that so strong a tide of wickedness was rolling around him, among a people towards whom he cherished a sincere affection; for whose safety he had hazarded his own life in battle; and for whose sake he was now a persecuted outcast. Amidst his varied sufferings in body and mind, he was reduced to a state of weakness, which naturally brought before his eyes the shadows of approaching death: he had become a spectacle of scornful contempt in the sight of others; for as they looked upon him, they shook their heads: he had become a reproach unto them; that is, the subject of their reproaches. From all these trials and provocations of his spirit, he turns with an incorruptible faith towards the mercies of his God:—Help me, O Lord my God: O save me according to thy mercy! And his prayer is not devoid of all consideration for his enemies; for he entreats that his hoped-for deliverance may be made the means of grace to them; that they may be brought to know how that from all his dangers and sufferings he shall have been delivered by the hand of the Lord; and that He alone had done it. But, should they still remain blind to the interposition of God's right hand and outstretched arm in his servant's behalf, and continue to curse him in their hearts; yet David prays that God may still bless him, and that all their wicked imaginations against

him may be confounded, and themselves put to shame and confusion. At this point, how gloriously does the Psalmist arise from the reflection upon his own sufferings, and upon the unenviable condition of them that persecute his soul! Like the aroused lion, shaking the dew-drops from his mane, his spirit awakes to the consciousness of his restored strength. Every cloud which overshadows him passes away, while his eyes are upraised in the confidence of returning faith, towards the Mercy-seat of the righteous Jehovah. All fear, all despondency, all complaining, vanish from his thoughts. The afflictions of time are all absorbed in his contemplation of an eternal deliverance—even the rescue of his soul from the power of unrighteous judges. But the triumphs reserved for David in his temporal experience, were beyond a doubt uppermost in his thoughts. He had been in his early life wonderfully supported, and strengthened, and delivered: witness his recorded conquest of the lion and the bear, and the boasting giant of Gath. He had moreover, by a special commission from the Almighty to his prophet Samuel, been anointed king over Israel, in preference to all his elder brethren, and in their presence. These remembered facts must therefore have proved stimulants to the strong faith of David in all his extremities. And here we have the evidence of it:—As for me, I will give great thanks unto the Lord with my mouth; and praise him among the multitude. He foresaw that the reign of the unrighteous Saul must be of short duration, and he knew that the Lord had preserved him through all his dangers, and against all his enemies, to succeed to the throne of Israel. He knew that it would be alike his duty and his interest to set the example of righteousness to the multitudes of his subjects; to lead them in the paths of righteousness; to feed them with a faithful and true heart; and in the administration of his future kingly office, to rule them prudently with all his power. As if, therefore, already in possession of the supreme authority, the Psalmist casts his thoughts

over and beyond the present discouraging impediments to his advancement; and foresees and foretels what shall be the evidences of his faith and submission to the divine will, in the sight of all men. He will be ever thankful to the Lord, and mindful of his covenant: he will be telling of his praise from day to day, and chiefly in the great congregations which shall be assembled for the public worship of their God. Herein is David a pattern for the instruction of all the kings and rulers of the earth; and not less so, to the humblest individuals among the professors of the pure and holy religion of Jesus: for all have their seasons of trial, their seasons of hope, and, if not shut out by their own misconduct, their seasons of useful influence in society. And be it remembered, that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XLV.

PSALM 110.

Besides that this Psalm is appropriated by our Church to the service for Christmas Day, there is enough of internal evidence to prove that its sole and exclusive subject is the Messiah Himself. Moreover our Lord thus applied it in his reproof of the carping Pharisees, (*Matt.* xxii,) when they would acknowledge Him only as a descendant of David. Another passage of the Psalm is also quoted by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews, (c. i,) to prove the superiority of Christ over even the angelic powers. Only a few of the more modern Jewish writers have disputed the application of this Psalm to the Messiah, while it has been freely admitted by many among the more ancient Rabbis. Much of the language of the Psalm is mysterious; but it is God the Father who is speaking to God the Son; and from God the Holy Ghost the sacred penman undoubtedly received the spirit of prophecy. There could have been no other prompting to the composition of this hymn of spiritual adoration, than the influence of the Spirit of Wisdom and of Knowledge; and it has unquestionably been in use in certain seasons of the Jewish worship.

Ver. 1—3. In this prophetic anticipation of Christ's triumphant re-ascension to the throne of his glory in heaven, David acknowledges in the promised Messiah, a Sovereign whose dominion should be boundless and endless, by the appointment and under the protection of the Lord Jehovah. It was the arrangement of the divine councils ere ever the earth and the world were formed, and could have been made known to man only by the agency of the Holy Spirit. David was in this instance the favoured recipient of the gracious communication; and this Psalm, though couched in the most poetic and figurative terms, is far more descriptive of the Messianic authority and power than any prophecy of earlier date, and more minute in its detail of the spiritual character of Christ's universal dominion. Sit thou on my right hand, saith Jehovah, until I

make thine enemies thy footstool. This clearly refers to our Lord's final exaltation, the reward of his gracious humiliation: for we find Him at the hour of his last approaching trial thus reproving Peter for his intemperate zeal:—Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? The Redeemer did but establish his kingdom upon the earth by his ministry and his sufferings: the maintenance of that kingdom, the perpetuation of his sway in the hearts of men, was to be perfected only by the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit, whom He made known as the Comforter; whose office it is to nourish the seeds of Gospel Truth in the stubborn soil of the human heart, and to bring to our remembrance all things whatsoever He hath taught us in his Holy Word. Thus it is that out of Zion God hath appeared in perfect beauty; the rod of his power chastening his own in love, and avenging Him upon all who are the enemies of their own souls; for whose salvation his beloved Son took our degraded nature upon Himself;

For whom the Godhead once to earth
Bow'd down the heavens to prove
Their unimagi'd glories ours,
And ours the treasures of his love!

But whose power is manifested in the conversion of the hearts of his foes by nature, until they offer Him free-will offerings of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, with an Holy worship: until they are regenerate, and born anew; when the dew of his birth, the children of his painful travail, shall be innumerable as the sparkling dew-drops upon every blade of grass and every flower of the field. Can anything be more beautifully poetic than this figure, when it is understood? The dew of thy birth is (as that) of the womb of the morning!

Ver. 4—7. The mysterious personage to whom our High Priest is likened in these verses, is first introduced in the Book

of Genesis, (c. xiv,) as king of Salem, and priest of the Most High God; here referred to by the Psalmist; and finally by the Apostle to the Hebrews, (c. vii,) who has drawn a veil of mystery around the character whom he compares with the Son of God, which neither human learning nor human ingenuity has ever yet been able to penetrate. For, says the Apostle, this Melchisedech.....being by interpretation king of righteousness, and after that also king of Salem, which is king of peace; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually. And after this order, as the Psalmist informs us, God the Father hath appointed the Son to be a priest for ever; promising unto Him the support of the Almighty's right hand, in his destined warfare with his spiritual foes: for even the kings of the earth who oppose his sway shall fall before Him; the heathen nations shall submit to his judgments; such as prolong their hostility to his government, shall be utterly destroyed; their powerful confederacy shall be broken up, and their leaders divided asunder and scattered over divers countries; even though the triumphant warrior, in his hot pursuit of his foes because of the word of truth, and meekness, and righteousness, be compelled to drink of the brook by the way, for the refreshing of his strength. The Saviour in his way to glory was destined to drink of the waters of affliction; they rolled between Him and the throne of his glory; He bowed Himself down, and drank of it for us all; He accomplished his awful and stupendous undertaking; He arose victorious from the valley of the shadow of death, where the waters came in, even unto his soul; and from thence ascended to that holy and heavenly Mount, where He reigneth till his enemies be made his footstool.*

* See Bp. Horne *in loco*.

PSALM 111.

This is a Song of Praise, which is appointed to be used in our Church on Easter-day, and is commemorative of the wonderful works of God in favour of his chosen people; wherein the Psalmist exhorts all men, by his own example, to cherish a faithful devotedness to the God of their salvation. That salvation was wrought for us by the humiliation and self-sacrifice of our Redeemer, and perfected in the sight of men and angels by his triumphant resurrection from the grave. As commemorative of this great event, therefore, the Psalm is deeply interesting to the Christian world.

Ver. 1. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the tongue confession is made unto salvation. The Psalmist acts in the spirit of this precept, while contemplating the works of the merciful and gracious Lord; to whose favourable loving-kindness he is always prompt to ascribe all the blessings experienced by his people Israel, and all the rich provisions made in the promised Covenant of Grace for mankind at large. It cannot be said that either of the acts of devotional service is perfect, the one without the other. The public worship of God is commanded, but our frailties may impel us to join in it, without our being moved thereto by a single aspiration of heart-felt piety. On the other hand, we may read, and pray, and meditate in secret, as many do, and fancy ourselves discharging the whole duty of man to his God, while shutting out all reflection upon the imperative command, *Hallow my Sabbaths*: and, touching the manner, *Unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose to put His Name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come*. The resolve here made by the Psalmist, includes both branches of our duty to God, private and public devotion; the sacrifice of the heart in secret, and the open confession of our faith in the assembling of ourselves together. And surely, brethren, the example of the man after God's own heart may not be slightly regarded. *I, says David, will give thanks unto*

the Lord with my whole heart; secretly among the faithful, and in the congregation.

Ver. 2—9. There is a different reading of this second verse in our oldest Bibles, namely, The works of the Lord are great, and *ought to be* sought out: and an ancient expositor suggests, that though the Hebrew word may answer to *sought*, yet that *found* or *known* is the more appropriate translation: it certainly gives to the verse a clearer meaning; forasmuch as that they who find the greatest pleasure in studying the works of the Lord, will be best qualified to prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. In this devotional hymn those works are celebrated, and praises are offered to the Most High, for that He hath established perpetual memorials of them; lest his frail and erring creatures forget to adore Him for his goodness, and to declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men. For by the establishment of his Covenant of Grace, He hath given meat, that is, hath provided spiritual food for them that fear Him; and an inheritance of perpetual supplies, which was foreshadowed in the sustenance of his people Israel, during their wanderings in the wilderness towards their attainment of the promised land, the heritage of the heathen. The Psalmist shews that in both these dispensations the works of the divine hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments, that is, whatsoever things he hath ordained to come to pass, shall stand for ever and ever; because they have their foundation in truth and equity. And He will complete his merciful designs in his own appointed time, by sending redemption unto his people: for his Covenant is already commanded, established, gone forth from everlasting. Holy and Reverend therefore is his Name. How appropriate then is the pious reflection with which the Psalmist concludes this devotional hymn; and how encouraging the assurance he has founded thereupon! [Read 10.]

PSALM 112.

As the preceding Psalm concludes with a strong commendation of the Christian grace of godly fear, so this opens with the same subject, declaring the fear of the Lord to be the highest point of true wisdom, insuring the blessedness which is the ultimate object of human hopes. And here it is shewn, that this fear is also the truest earnest of temporal peace and prosperity: a consummation which we cannot help desiring, however strong our faith in the final recompense of reward.

Ver. 1. The first and great advantage which the Psalmist here imputes to an abiding fear of the Lord, is of a spiritual nature. St. John reminds us, in his first General Epistle, that the commandments of the Lord are not grievous, and that the keeping of the commandments is the love of God; that is, the evidence of our love of God. Now of all the passions that divide the empire of the human breast, Love is at once the most powerful and the most spiritual, as long as it maintains its independence of the sway of the more earthly passions. It is the only one capable of embracing objects which lie beyond and above the earth; and though it bears its part of the general pollution of our nature by sin; though the gold is become dim, and the most fine gold changed; yet does its remaining brightness, like that of the westering sun, shoot its rays upward towards the Source of life, and light, and beauty. Blessed, therefore are they, whose godly fear is enshrined in godly love; for perfect love casteth out every other fear, and inspires an habitual delight in the divine commandments, and thereupon builds the faith that maketh not ashamed.

Ver. 2—9. This portion of the Psalm consists of alternate descriptions of the good deeds of him who maketh the Law of the Lord his delight, and of the temporal blessedness attendant upon those deeds. In their primary sense, the terms employed refer to the reward of virtuous deeds under the legal economy; but we are justified in imputing to them a much broader meaning with reference to the Gospel dispensation. The Hebrew

words, which are interpreted *riches* and *plenteousness*, bear also the meaning, *kindness* and *beneficence*, the abiding virtues or graces of the good man's dwelling. And as the Apostle instructs us, that of all the Christian graces, charity is the most enduring and the greatest; so the Psalmist affirms it to be that righteousness which endureth for ever: an affirmation which St. Paul himself strengthens by quoting the passage in his second Epistle to the Corinthians—As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor; his righteousness remaineth for ever.

Ver. 10. In this verse the Psalmist plainly alludes to the final judgment: for it is not at the good deeds of the righteous that the ungodly man shall be grieved, and consume away; but at seeing their eternal recompense: when he shall be convicted of the vanity and folly of his own desires and pursuits; which, as he then shall acknowledge to have passed away, are now doomed with himself to perish everlastingly.

PSALM 113.

As the doctrine of the universal Providence of God is the foundation of all practical piety, so is it the solemn subject of many of the sacred effusions of the Psalmist's thoughts. In this Psalm it is exclusively dwelt upon, as the great motive to the praise of the Lord by his professing servants, who are here incited to an habitual acknowledgment and celebration of the Divine Goodness.

Ver. 1—8. The pure simplicity which pervades the entire matter of this Psalm, while it shuts out all necessity of explanation, leads the mind unconsciously into meditation. However strong are the claims upon our grateful homage, established by the visible operations of God's Providence, it is by the light of Gospel Truth that we are enabled to contemplate in its perfection the loving-kindness of the Lord. For as all the works of Divine Power, which are the objects of our senses, can exercise only a transient temporal influence upon the faculties of

the soul; so is that influence enlarged, extended, and perpetuated, by the increased knowledge of the Creator and Ruler of all things, which we derive from the truths that are revealed in God's Holy Word. Mankind, living under the legal dispensation had only a little more than the light of nature to guide them. That little was derived from the inspired teaching of a favoured few, who were the appointed medium of communication between Jehovah and his people; and that chiefly tending to their instruction in temporal duties, with a reference to only temporal rewards or chastisements. To them, therefore, the providential operations of the Deity were the Scriptures of Nature, wherein they were instructed by the authorized interpreters of the Divine Will to read, mark, and learn the attributes of God; and thence to cherish in their own souls that holy fear and love, which should prove the earnest of the perpetuity of the divine favour, and protection, and beneficence. In those operations, however, the deeply reflective mind of the Psalmist saw enough to inspire him with the most devoted faith, the most ardent gratitude, the most constant practical piety: and he labours in his simple but sublime lessons of truth, to promote in the hearts of all men correspondent emotions:—Blessed be the name of the Lord, from this time forth for evermore! And, in the exercise of that prophetic gift which was vouchsafed to him, he foretels the universal dominion that would thereafter be established, by the completion of that promised Covenant of grace and mercy, to be revealed in the expected Messiah:—The Lord's Name is praised from the rising up of the sun to the going down of the same: He shall extend the sceptre of his spiritual kingdom even over the long-rejected and benighted heathen: He shall cherish them under his wings, and they shall be safe under his feathers; until they are made partakers of the benefits of redemption, and raised to honour with his more favoured ones, even with

the princes of his own people ; when all mankind shall become one fold under the one Shepherd and Bishop of Souls ; when all the families of the earth shall be blessed in Him, and even the barren wastes of heathenism and idolatry shall flourish as fruitful fields ; and the daughters of their land, like the desponding wives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob of old, be made the joyful mothers of children, the heirs of bliss and glory, covenanted from and to all eternity.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XLVI.

PSALM 114.

This is one of the Psalms appointed by our Church to be read on Easter-Day; for the resurrection of our Lord from the bonds of the grave was the completion of our spiritual deliverance from the power of our great oppressor Satan; and is aptly prefigured by the deliverance of the Israelites from the tyranny of Pharaoh, and all the pains and penalties attendant upon their bondage in Egypt. Ours is the greater deliverance from the captivity of sin and death; under which all the children of Adam must have groaned and travailed in pain together to the end of time, had not a Redeemer mighty to save rescued us from this worse than Egyptian slavery.

Ver. 1—3. The Psalmist here celebrates the two great events in the history of the Israelites, in which the hand of God appeared in a visible manner, to mark them as the people of his peculiar care. Not only had their captivity been foretold, but the exact term of its duration. It was announced to Abraham by God Himself, in the terms recorded in the 15th chapter of Genesis:—Know of a surety, that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And their deliverance is recorded in the 12th chapter of the book of Exodus, which takes its title from this circumstance; the meaning of the word Exodus being, a going out. These are the words of the record: Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who dwelt in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. This is the event commemorated by the Psalmist in that magnificence of language, which always

distinguishes his genius upon subjects of holy joy and exultation. Moses speaks of the Israelites as all the hosts of the Lord. David tells us that Judah was his sanctuary; that is, the people among whom God had chosen to fix his sanctuary; and Israel his dominion; that is, his peculiar kingdom, in which he would personally reign, and exercise the authority of a monarch: and which continued until the days of Saul, when the people murmured, because they were not governed like the surrounding nations; as they were reminded in the forcible language of the prophet Samuel; who was one of the judges under whom they had dwelt in safety, and by whose wise administration of the power committed to them, Israel had been delivered out of the hands of their enemies on every side: for, says he, ye said unto me, Nay, but a king shall reign over us, when the Lord your God was your king! I produce this portion of the Jewish history to illustrate the words of the Psalmist, when he commemorates the mighty deliverance of his people by two great manifestations of the divine power and love on their behalf. Judah was the sanctuary of the Lord, and Israel his dominion. The sea saw that, and fled: Jordan was driven back. Thus does the sacred poet combine together the two great events, by which the redemption of the Israelites from their captivity was effected, though forty years had elapsed between the occurrence of each—the first when Moses was conducting them beyond the borders of Egypt, towards the Red Sea; the other, after the death of Moses, when Joshua led them to the river Jordan; the only barrier then remaining, between them and the land of Canaan; and which, in the emphatic language of the Psalmist, was driven back, that the Ark of the Lord, and the priests, and the people, might pass through in safety, to possess that good land which the Lord their God had given them for an inheritance.

Ver. 4—8. The first three of these verses must be deemed merely poetical and figurative; unless we seek for some mystical

meaning, by which they may be made applicable to some actual events in the subsequent history of God's Church. But we need not, my brethren, search for hidden mysteries, while we may draw practical knowledge from the surface of things. The passage of the Red Sea, and the passage of the great river Jordan, the one at the commencement, the other at the close of their forty years of wandering, must have been occasions of the most unbounded rejoicing by so great a multitude of people: for we read, that when they departed from Egypt they numbered six hundred thousand, beside women and children; and the number had probably greatly increased in the forty years before they reached the banks of Jordan; for there had been time for two younger generations to spring up, although in fulfilment of God's judgment on their repeated murmurings, not one of the multitude above twenty years of age, who had come out of Egypt, lived to see the promised land, except Caleb and Joshua. While reflecting, therefore, upon what must have been the joyous exultation of such a vast congregation, the Psalmist only resorts to hyperbolical expressions, such as are in common use at this day, when we are describing the effects of any uncommon occurrence. And after having placed before us the imaginative picture of the mountains and little hills, joining in the festivity of the people, the poet seems to indulge a vein of facetious irony at the scenes which his genius had created:—What aileth thee, O sea, that thou fleddest: and thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams: and ye little hills like young sheep? While to the awful and astounding facts, that the waters both of the sea and the river, had fled at the command of their Creator, the Psalmist yields his most reverential attention; calling upon the whole earth to tremble at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob; reminding his own people that those were not the only manifestations of his power in their behalf; for that He was the same God who had preserved the

lives of their forefathers in the wilderness, by miracles no less demonstrative of his Omnipotence. And we should bear in mind, my brethren, that though in our day the Almighty Ruler of the universe condescends more frequently to employ human means and instruments to work out the ends of his Providence, no less than of his Grace, in behalf of the children of men; we are equally indebted to his immediate loving-kindness for all the blessings we enjoy, as were the wanderers in the wilderness. We are taught to pray daily for our daily bread; and though our lot fall into our lap while we are yet unmindful of the gratitude we owe to the great Giver; this earth would become indeed a dreary wilderness, should He suspend for a single day his universal care, or withhold his undeserved bounties: for it is only when He giveth that we can gather: when He openeth his hand, that we can be filled with good. Therefore the habitual aspirations of our thoughts should be, Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits!

PSALM 115.

If this Psalm cannot be proved to have formed a portion of the service of the Temple in the days of its pious author, it is unquestionably adapted to that purpose in every place upon earth, which is dedicated to the worship of the true God. It is in brief a prayer of the Church, proclaiming the glory of her great Head; professing her faith in Him; denouncing the absurdities of idol worship; encouraging the believer to perseverance in practical faith on the continued blessing of Jehovah on his Church and people; and prophesying that his praise shall never cease to be resounded by their voices from this time forth for evermore.

Ver. 1—3. If we bear in mind the rebellious character of the Israelites, as manifested throughout their entire history, it will plainly appear, that the preservation among them of a spiritual worship was little owing to their own zeal or faithfulness; but entirely to that gracious Covenant with Abraham, by which, however unworthy, they were the adopted children of God, his chosen seed from among all the posterity of Adam.

David acknowledges this truth in the commencement of the Psalm now before us: and takes occasion from this just reflection, to exult in the confidence of Israel's superior safety, under all the threats and mockery of the heathen tribes. To their impious demands after an invisible God, which probably was their common practice in the seasons of their threatenings and more probably in those of any transient triumph, the faithful king exultingly replies, that his God is in heaven, far above and beyond the dull vision of heathen ignorance; and that His sovereign sway is universal; for that whatsoever pleaseth Him is the irresistible law of all nature. His will is paramount over all. His omniscience cannot be deceived, nor his commands evaded. But the Psalmist does not leave the heathen in the undisturbed possession of their gross delusions. He points out the absurdities of their practices, and laughs them to scorn, as mere pretenders to the gift of *reason*; and as no better than the lifeless idols of their worship.

Ver. 4—8. All that is said here of the dumb and senseless god of an idolatrous people, may with equal truth be affirmed of all earthly objects upon which the carnal mind sets its misplaced affections. It is true almost to the letter, that *these* idols are of silver and gold: for these things form the great object of all worldly desires, as those which can best minister to the tastes and appetites of depraved nature. To these idols may be figuratively assigned all the organs of sense and motion which belong to the human frame: yet are they only imaginary powers, which the men of this world ascribe to them, because they are supposed capable of bestowing on their possessors all which they call good—rank, and power, and authority, and an advantage over the multitude, and the means of unhallowed indulgences, and the gratification of forbidden desires, and all the pomps and vanities of life; and more than all besides, independence of the control of all laws human and divine. It is too often that we see wealth so employed, though it be to the dishonour of the great Giver, and to the danger, if not

to the certain destruction, of the souls of these idolators. The worshippers at the shrine of Mammon are even now, in Christian lands, more numerous than the heathen of old. These were the Gentiles ; and probably we derive from them not only our life-blood, (for we also are Gentiles,) but also our strong disposition to the idolatry of wealth—the heart-worship of gold and silver. And of this delusion not one class of mankind only are the willing victims. The high and the comparatively low are equally chargeable with this sin—as with the servant, so it is with the master ; as with the people, so it is with the priest : for not even the ministers of religion are free from this charge. And what the Psalmist says of the idols of silver and gold set up by the heathen nations, may with equal truth be said of worldly riches in their corporate character ; for such attributes and faculties do men ascribe to them, as supply the places of limbs and features—mouths, and ears, and noses, and hands, and feet : that is, that wealth can command every enjoyment which is to be derived through our senses. Yet alas ! it is often found by the possessors of superabundant wealth, and by the sordid grovellers after it, that it yields none of these delights, while their thoughts are absorbed in the worship of their idol ; that it neither sees, nor hears, nor feels, nor moves in their behalf, in the hour of nature's painful necessities ; when sickness prevails, when afflictions surround their hearths, when old age bedims their own faculties, or when the death-bed is only a foreshadowed picture of the winding-sheet and the grave. Wisely therefore and beneficently does the Psalmist lead us on to a just view of the character of those things, before which the men of this world bow themselves in servile adoration ; by telling us in one plain and brief sentence, that as the object of their idolatry is really worthless, so are all they that put their trust in it.

Ver. 9—11. These three verses contain exhortations to three distinct bodies of persons. The entire Church of God is designated the House of Israel ; and it is reminded collec-

tively of its dependence for safety and prosperity upon the protection and blessing of the One Living God. Nor is Christ's Holy Catholic Church throughout the world less dependent on the same omnipotent arm for its perpetuity and strength. It is beleaguered on every side by the emissaries of Satan, by the rulers of the darkness of this world, and by spiritual wickedness even in the high places of our own national councils. But to the Christian, as to the Israelitish Church it is said, put thou thy trust in the Lord: He is their succour and defence. Secondly, the Psalmist warns the ministering servants of the Temple, they who were exclusively of the house of Aaron under the Jewish dispensation, to hold fast their integrity, to maintain their faithfulness, to preserve their confidence in the Lord Jehovah. Such was the fearful position of their Church in the days of David, that the fidelity of the priesthood was, under God, the great bulwark of its security. And so it ever will be in the Church of Christ, in all times of its tribulation, and in all times of its wealth. It behoves the ministers of religion above all others, to maintain within themselves the principle of faith; and in the hour of threatening or of present danger, to be unto their flocks examples of its practical value to all who profess and call themselves Christians. Thirdly, the Psalmist excites every individual worshipper to put his trust in the Lord, assuring all men that he is their helper and defender. Our Saviour reminds us that we are of more value in the sight of God than the lower orders of his creation; and yet, to win our faithful reliance on his providential care, assures us that not one of those shall fall to the ground without his knowledge and permission. Oh then, ye of little faith, wherefore should ye doubt? The utter helplessness of our unsupported nature should alone teach us the lessons of faith; while our reason, and the revelation of the knowledge of a God mighty to save, should dispel every fear of every evil which can assail only our temporal peace. Fear not, little flock: it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, where

the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest; wherein the afflicted rest together, and hear no more the voice of the oppressor. From these assurances the Psalmist proceeds to yet warmer expressions of his faith.

Ver. 12—16. Calling to mind his own and his people's experience of the divine favour in past times, the pious king of Israel indulges an unlimited declaration of his entire dependance upon the goodness of the Lord towards them thereafter. We are too prone, my brethren, to a forgetfulness of past mercies; and to a blindness touching the great truth, that these mercies flow from the inexhaustible fountain of divine love; that by the God of Love alone we are protected through every moment of our time from seen and from unseen dangers; and that it is of his mercy towards our innumerable transgressions of his known laws that we are not consumed. To this forgetfulness and blindness we owe it, that in the seasons of adversity, in the times of our need, or sickness, or sorrow, our faith is so feeble, our aspirations and prayers towards the mercy-seat so few and far between. But let him who really wishes to warm his own heart to the point of devotion, let him only read the first line of these five verses, and reflect upon his own experience; and reflect with a willingness to admit the thought and belief of a guardian God into that awakened heart: and how, I ask, will he resist the impression, how will he shut out the conviction, that what he learns from the remaining portion of these verses, is a lesson of divine inspiration; a call from the voice of God Himself, to believe in Him, to fear Him, to put an entire trust in Him, and to serve Him truly, thankfully, and confidingly, all the days of his life? For in these copious and flowing declarations of the loving-kindness of the Lord, the sacred penman is but the messenger of the glad tidings; his own heart is but the receptacle of those cheering truths which the Holy Spirit poured into it; and which, as a minister of the Truth, he has dispensed for the instruction and benefit of a thousand generations. The Lord *hath* been mindful of us.

Our hope is grounded upon experience; and that hope is brightened into assurance by the fervid spirit of this gifted Seer. For as with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, so with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. The Lord *hath* been mindful of us, and He *shall* bless us: He shall bless his Church in its aggregate capacity: He shall bless his Priesthood: He shall bless the people, personally and individually, who fear Him, both small and great. Ye are the blessed of the Lord, if ye be found faithful: for as He is the Creator of all things, and Ruler over all, and Disposer of all, and the Giver of every good and perfect gift to all who call upon Him, and honour his Holy Name and his word; and as surely as He hath reserved the whole heavens for his own glory and majesty, so hath he given the earth to the children of men. But this, as we are reminded in the concluding verses of the Psalm, is a gift bestowed upon us as a means of working out our own salvation; the gift of time, wherein to prepare for eternity: and whatever portion of this gift may be allotted to each of us severally, it is the whole tenor of the instruction we derive from the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour, that our yoke of duty is made easy, and its burthen light, only by following Him, by observance of his precepts, by obedience to his commandments, by walking after his example. Yet the conclusion to which we must necessarily come is, that in the work apportioned to us, we have all to strive against a corrupt nature, which is at enmity against God—an awful position, but as we know, not hopeless. The work, however, is sufficiently burthensome to demand our vigilance, our determination, and the application of all our energies, while it is yet called to-day; for the night is stealing upon each of us wherein no man can work. This is the reflection which follows upon the Psalmist's most encouraging enumeration of the divine blessings we possess, and may attain; and which should prompt us to cherish those feelings of grateful adoration expressed in his concluding words. [Read 17, 18.]

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XLVII.

PSALM 116.

Some have disputed that this Psalm is the composition of David's pen, because his name does not appear in the title. Upon this inconclusive evidence, however, we may doubt the authority for many among the Psalms. But an old expositor,* upon whose opinion we may place some reliance, affirms both the authorship and the occasion of it. He says, he believes it to have been written by David at the time when he had been delivered from all his perils, and was firmly established in his kingdom; and, for a lasting monument of his grateful spirit. As the language throughout is in the name of a single individual, we must suppose the Psalmist speaking in his own person as the representative of all Israel.

Ver. 1—8. This portion is expressive of joyfulness and thanksgiving; and truly, a season of peaceful security from all their enemies round about, after long years of danger and warfare and captivity, presented a strong claim upon the national gratitude. The pious king of Israel was unquestionably the first to feel and acknowledge this; and, probably, this warm effusion of a grateful heart was the work of some meditative hour in his closet. Every line, however, is more or less applicable to the experience of every faithful subject within his dominion. But, by speaking in his own name only, the Psalmist propounds an exemplary lesson of what is the duty of every individual, and a quiet call upon all the children of Sion to rejoice in their Heavenly King. For they could each say, as truly as David himself, The snares of death compassed me round about; because, as often as the throne or the sovereign is in danger, from foreign foes or domestic treachery, the people are equally so. They find trouble and heaviness; and

* Amyraldus.

their duty and their hope then is, to call upon the Name of the Lord. Such has been acknowledged in the practice of all Christian countries, by the appointment of days to be set apart for humiliation or thanksgiving, as circumstances require: such should be the practice of every Christian, under his experience of the changes and chances of this mortal life: for why? in the hand of the Lord are all our times and seasons. His Spirit hath declared, As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: and from Him proceed the blessings of peace and plenteousness, demanding our grateful acknowledgment, that gracious is the Lord and righteous: yea, our God is merciful. He alone delivereth our soul from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling.

Ver. 9—16. The vows here repeated and prolonged, form the most appropriate corollary to the preceding acknowledgments of mercies experienced. It is not enough, to be merely thankful for the good vouchsafed to us from on high. Our blessings, of whatever kind, demand a continuous and prospective devotedness of the heart to the Giver of all good. They are subjects for perpetual gratefulness—they are claims upon our unceasing fidelity to his service. I will walk before the Lord while I am in the land of the living. The conscience of the Psalmist, however, seems to have suddenly reproached him with some past inadvertency of speech, at some period when he had been sore troubled; when, probably, he had been tempted to doubt the truth of those Divine promises on his behalf, uttered by the prophets of old; when in his haste he had given expression to that doubt, by pronouncing them all liars. But such is human nature in its unsupported weakness. Such was the infirmity of Peter, as recorded by St. Matthew, when Jesus rebuked him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? For though his faith had emboldened him to walk forth upon the water, to greet his Divine Master, yet when he saw the wind boisterous he was afraid. David had encountered many dan-

gers with the courageous spirit of a sublime faith ; but he had also experienced his moments of fear and faltering. Now, however, he exhibits a repentance of this acknowledged weakness, equally sublime : for, remembering all his past deliverances, he exclaims, What shall I give unto the Lord for all his benefits ? And the rejoinder is a remarkable instance of prophetic language, which in the days of the legal dispensation could have been used only figuratively :—I will receive the cup of salvation. We, brethren, as professing Christians, cannot look upon this passage, without being carried onward to that touching scene, when our persecuted Lord and Master appealed to the affections of his disciples, by the most simple request that ever was enunciated on the approach of death : when, after supper, He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this : Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of Me ! In the succeeding verse of the Psalm, to that which has just been observed upon, a sentence occurs, which it seems difficult to connect with the context. It is, however, a mere ejaculation of deeply-rooted confidence in the Divine Love.—Right dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints ! And what does it imply ? On the one hand, that the life of God's faithful servants is too securely guarded by the watchful care of his Providence, to be at the mercy of every hostile power ; and on the other hand, that the moment when the aged Christian, having fought the good fight, and finished his course, shall be restored to "the bosom of his Father and his God," is right dear in the sight of the Lord : that moment, when the Redeemer, as it is beautifully said by the Prophet Isaiah, shall see of the travail of *his* soul, and shall be satisfied. The Psalmist then falls into the humble acknowledgment of his dependance upon the bounty of God, as his servant, and the son of his servant, who had been by the goodness of his Divine Master, freed from the slavery to which he was born ; thus exemplifying the maxim of the Apostle

Paul, that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; and thereupon resolving to devote his life to a grateful remembrance of all its experienced blessings; and not only by thanksgiving and prayer in individual privacy, but in such a manner as should be exemplary to the world around him:—I will pay my vows unto the Lord in the sight of all his people: in the courts of the Lord's house, even in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord!

PSALM 117.

This Psalm is singular, both for its matter and for its brevity. First, because no other Psalm treats of the calling of the Gentiles to the Church of God; and secondly, that as there were but two distinct families, the Jews and the Gentiles, to be initiated in the knowledge of Christ, the exhortation should be limited to two short verses. And though many of the prophecies of the Old Testament are sufficiently plain upon this subject, none are so decisive and exclusive as this short Psalm. It is therefore regarded as a work of divine inspiration, that all obscurity touching this great event might be removed from the minds of the then passing generations. St. Paul refers to it in his Epistle to the Romans, (c. xv.)

Ver. 1, 2. The promise given to Abram, that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed, was too selfishly appropriated by the Jews through many generations: for though they even looked for the promised Messiah, they could not divest themselves of the opinion, that they alone were the people who should be benefited by his advent. Under this delusion, they laboured until the very fulfilment of the promise, and even after. Notwithstanding that our Saviour Himself had forewarned them, that Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles; yet at a later period, while Peter was preaching to Cornelius and his company, even they of the circumcision *which believed*, were astonished, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless, as the Psalmist reminds his own people, the truth of the Lord endureth for ever; and his promise to Abram was no exclusive

covenant—it embraced all the families of the earth, through every succeeding generation; Jew and Greek, bond and free, male and female; for all are one in Christ Jesus. And though the infatuate blindness of the Jews urged them on to the persecution of Him who had been for so many ages the Desire of all Nations, and to crucify the Lord of Life and Glory Himself; yet was He the Angel of that universal Covenant of Grace and Mercy, which in its character so far exceeded their expectations, that instead of merely confirming their hitherto exclusive privileges, as the original chosen people of God, it enlarged, enriched, and immortalized the family of the faithful. And it may truly be said of the Messiah in his mission of mercy, as it affected the immediate descendants of Abram,

The very head and front of his offending
Hath this extent—no more!

For behold, his light is come: the glory of the Lord *hath* risen upon the Church: darkness had covered the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord *hath* arisen upon her, and his glory *hath been* seen upon her: and the Gentiles *have* come to his light, and their kings to the brightness of his rising! The prophetic eye of the Royal Seer of Israel dwelt with ecstasy on the certain, yet far-off fulfilment, of Isaiah's later vision of inspiration. He calls upon the estranged nations with a confidence that would seem to be justified only by an acted reality; and he was prompted to this boldness, by his faith in the Divine Word. The truth of the Lord endureth for ever: and he hath promised to his well-beloved Son, Desire of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for thine inheritance. Therefore, praise the Lord, all ye heathen; praise Him all ye nations. For his merciful kindness is ever more and more towards *us*: and *all* the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head! The better, however, to understand the full import and importance

of this Psalm, let us examine into the practical reply of the nations to this long-cherished record of Divine inspiration: for we may not doubt, that the suggestion of this call by the Holy Spirit to the mind of the sacred penman, was tantamount to an irresistible command, that through his agency it should be conveyed to the hearts of a thousand generations: for thus hath the Almighty spoken by another of his favoured servants:—As the rain cometh down, and the snow from Heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud; that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it. We come, then, to the results of these prophetic declarations. Our Saviour, reproving the blindness of the Pharisees, by the Scriptures, by reason, and by a miracle upon the man with a withered hand, refers them to the prophecy of Isaiah, that in His (Christ's) Name shall the Gentiles trust. Again, when Jesus warned them that they should seek Him and should not find Him, they said among themselves, Will He go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? A rather strong evidence of their jealousy, and of their suspicion, that though they rejected Him, He *might* be the promised Messiah, to whom the Gentiles should come. Again, the divine testimony is given upon the occasion of the miraculous conversion of Saul:—He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear my Name before the Gentiles. Next, the Apostles and brethren that were in Judea, heard that the Gentiles had also received the Word of God; and when Peter was reproved by “them of the circumcision” for going among the Gentiles, he explained the matter to them so satisfactorily, that having heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life! And when Barnabas and Saul were set apart to

preach to the Gentiles, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and exhorted the people in the synagogue, until the anger of the Jews was stirred up, and they left it; when the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath-day. Upon this occasion, the multitudes assembled filled the Jews with envy, until they were excited even to blaspheming: whereupon the preachers administered this rebuke to them:—It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set Thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that Thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the Word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed. And the Word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. This detail of the fulfilment of the prophecies, and of the early progress of Christianity among the heathen nations, might be swelled to a great extent; placing the question of the Psalmist's inspired call upon all nations, but more especially upon ourselves, the descendants of Gentile converts to Christianity, beyond all controversy. But herein, brethren, we are not justified in indulging an unholy triumph over the blindness in part which hath happened unto Israel, making way for our adoption as the sons of God. The reasoning of the Apostle to the Romans is conclusive, and touchingly forcible; and with it I will conclude the exposition of this remarkable Psalm:—If thou wert cut out of the olive-tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive-tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved. Therefore, praise ye the Lord.

PSALM 118.

There is so little good effected by those expositors who have attempted to analyze this Psalm, that no encouragement is given to renew the undertaking. It is plainly a commemoration ode, written for some signal occasion; possibly for the solemn inauguration of the King into the full possession of his sovereignty; or it may have been composed for the fuller celebration of a day of public thanksgiving, for some national victory obtained over the enemies of Israel. For whatever purpose it was penned, it bears the form of a musical dialogue, or anthem in several parts, to be chaunted during some religious procession to the temple; wherein the king taking the lead, sustains also the principal part in the sacred melody. It does not appear that commentators derive any authority from the Hebrew copies for the divisions they have adopted, as they differ from each other. I select that which appears best adapted to the sense of the respective parts. The persons engaged in the service are the King himself, the Levites or Porters of the gates of the Temple, the Priests, and the Congregation of Worshippers. The first nineteen verses are chaunted by David. (Read.) The twentieth is given to the Levites. (Read.) The five following to David. (Read.) The two next to the Priests. (Read.) The twenty-eighth verse to David. (Read.) And the last verse, being a repetition of the first, chaunted in full chorus, by King, Priests, and People. Nothing can surpass the fervour of the entire composition; and if we can imagine such an occasion as either of those to which I have alluded, we may envy, even now, the feelings of those who bore a part in the grateful demonstration of joy; although their hearts have ceased to vibrate, and their voices have slept in silence, for nearly three thousand years! Every generation, however, has its motives to gratitude and adoration of the Giver of all Good: because that He is gracious, and that his mercy endureth for ever.

Glory be to the Father. &c.

LECTURE XLVIII.

PSALM 119.

This Psalm, which is said by an old writer to be the longest lyric composition existing in any language, is not positively known to be the production of David's pen; and the absence of those bold poetic flights which distinguish many of these sacred hymns, seems to justify the doubt; but this as a general argument is not of much weight, since we see, in the works of many of the most celebrated writers of every age, an equal diversity in the manner of handling their different subjects. In this Psalm many things and many words are repeated; and it bears the character of a series of lessons, or exercises for the mind of the reader, which, for the better help of the memory, are divided into brief portions; every part beginning with a separate letter of the Alphabet, and each verse of each part beginning with the same letter; the whole consisting of twenty-two portions, correspondent with the number of letters in the Hebrew Alphabet. Taken together, it may be considered an epitome of all the prophetic doctrines propounded in the Book of Psalms, interspersed here and there with evangelical truths; and it opens, as does the book itself, with a reflection upon what is classically termed the *summum bonum*, that is, the chief good attainable by man in this life. I must treat it however, as the production of David's pen.

PART i.—*Aleph*.

Ver. 1—3. In another Psalm occurs this reflection:—Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the Name of the Lord our God. This is a figurative description of the generally vain objects upon which men place their dependance. In the eyes of some, wealth constitutes the highest felicity; that is, wealth for its own sake, the mere possession of the dross, which is of no real value but in the using. Others consume their days in the pursuits of ambition, and the attainment of empty honours, unmindful that the highest earthly honour is the doing and promoting good. Others again place their chief happiness in self-indulgence in every kind of voluptuousness. All these are in a certain sense a law unto

themselves. They spurn the instructions of reason, the dictates of conscience, and the more awful warnings of God's written Law, even though that law be written in their very hearts. But the Psalmist points out the source of all real and enduring blessedness; namely, the faith that worketh by love, and produceth obedience. This is the Law of the Lord, this is the way in which we are commanded to walk; and blessed are we, if by turning not to the right hand or to the left, we contract none of the defilements of this naughty and miserable world. For it is only by keeping his testimonies, that we can counteract the effects of our innate pollution—that proneness to evil, which was bequeathed to us by our disobedient parents, and which is our inheritance by birth: for this is the wickedness we can eschew only by seeking the Lord with the whole heart, and by endeavouring to walk in his ways.

Ver. 4—8. The solemn opening of this passage is a strong proof, that the Psalmist considered obedience to be the true test of all religious profession:—Thou hast charged us that we shall diligently keep thy commandments. We all know with what awful solemnities the tables of the Divine Law were delivered to Moses on Mount Sinäi, when the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount, in the eyes of the children of Israel. And it is to be remarked, that the commandment to keep holy the Sabbath-day was emphatically repeated, in a short time, from the mouth of the Lord Himself; as though obedience to that were the very bond of their faithfulness to every other law of God:—Verily, my Sabbaths ye shall keep; for it is a sign between Me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you. Six days may work be done: but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work on the Sabbath-day, he shall surely be put to death. It is still an evil thing and a bitter, to set at nought the claims of Jehovah to our undivided reverence on this holy day; for this is the easy cord

which binds our spirits to the willing observance of every other divine command. It guides us, from time to time, in that direct way in which the Psalmist prays that he might be kept; confident that then he shall not be confounded; but in the possession of a thankful heart for the knowledge of the judgments of God's righteousness, shall be enabled by divine grace to value and to observe the outward ordinances of practical religion; so that in the end—in the hour of death and day of judgment—he shall not be utterly forsaken.

PART ii.—*Beth.*

Ver. 1—8. In every stage of our present brief existence we are encompassed by dangers ghostly and bodily; but in no portion of it are we in so great peril as in that of opening manhood. In earlier life we have generally the care and guardianship, the example and preceptive instruction of parents. In riper age, reason and conscience, and the necessities of our being, exercise their influence over our actions and desires: and the dawning consciousness of a fearful responsibility gradually illuminates the mind, and strengthens the understanding of what is our real condition; if the heart be not previously hardened by the early indulgence of sinful habits. But in the season of ripening youth, the world around us expands and sparkles in our view with a new and deceitful splendour. Every object of the senses dances before our imagination in its holiday trim, and allures our footsteps to the brink of some hidden pitfall, if we pursue it in the blindness of thoughtlessness. Yet is there a monitor within; whose still small voice, if it be not wholly disregarded, may be heard to echo, in every pulsation of the heart, Beware! But more than this:—there are few, comparatively, into whose minds, in their season of childhood, some seeds of virtuous caution and religious instruction have not been sown by parental love and

prudence. These cannot wholly perish, but by self-neglect in the very spring-time of our conscious existence. The being, and the presence, and the omniscience of a God, are a part and parcel of our instinctive knowledge—that which we first derive from the whisperings of our own immortal and spiritual nature—that knowledge which grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength; if its early shoots be not trampled down in the wild headstrong chase of the passions after unhallowed objects. From the knowledge of the being of a God there must necessarily arise some pleasing hope, some fond desire, some longing after an acquaintance with his character and his will, and the general economy of his government of the world. These aspirations also must spring from mingled sensations of fear and self-love, which awaken the natural reflection of our possible individual share in the universal dependance of our race upon the God of all, and our own portion of the allegiance due to Him. Here then is the question of universal interest, at this dangerous stage of our pilgrimage:—Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? Where shall he seek for guidance in the narrow path which alone leadeth to present and eternal peace; but from which if he turn, on either hand, he must wander on in darkness, till peradventure he fall into the pit of slow but inevitable destruction? Elibu the friend of Job reminds us of our better nature—the light which the immortal fire within us sheds upon our path in every stage of mature life:—There is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. This understanding, be it more or less in degree, suffices to awaken the conviction, that for wisdom we must apply to the source of wisdom; as the wayfaring man turns to the water-springs to assuage his thirst, and renew his strength. To his own importunate inquiry, the Psalmist gives the only reply that is consonant with Truth:—Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? Even by ruling himself after thy Word. And he makes his own profes-

sion of resolved obedience in terms that gradually increase in warmth and energy, as he proceeds: this is the exemplary portion of the lesson, so valuable to those who are just starting in the race of life:—With my whole heart have I sought Thee; thy words have I hid within my heart; with my lips have I been telling of all thy judgments; I have great delight in the way of thy testimonies; I will talk of thy commandments; my delight shall be in thy statutes; and I will not forget thy Word. Now, whatever a “young man” may think of a religious profession—whether he be deterred from it by the dread of the world’s ridicule; or restrained by the more virtuous fear of seeming to be better than his communings with his own heart will allow him to judge himself:—here are instructions enforced by example, which if practically followed, will arm him against either temptation to yield to indifference, or despondently to cherish in himself the growth of an evil heart of unbelief. The inward resolve is the first step towards acquiring strength for perseverance. This needs no ostentatious display of piety; no appeal to the world’s judgment; no assumption of superficial sanctity: but in proportion as the resolve gains vigour from practice, so will the unperceived aid of the Holy Spirit support and confirm the heart, and ennoble the character of the willing disciple, and cleanse his way from the pollutions of the world without, and of the corrupt nature within him. Then will follow the fruit of self-culture, (watered as it will be from above,) in the humble unpretending profession of a faith that maketh not ashamed: a profession that cannot and may not always be suppressed, forasmuch as the faith imparted—which, notwithstanding our own virtuous resolves, is the immediate gift of God—forasmuch as this faith imposes upon the recipient, the social obligation to let his light so shine, that men may see his good works, and glorify God with himself.

PART iii.—*Gimel.*

Ver. 1, 2. It is upon the illumination of the mind that all useful knowledge depends. And it was for this the great Apostle assures the Church at Ephesus that he so earnestly prayed on their behalf,—That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance, in the saints; and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. It is for this illumination that David prays in his own concise and simple language:—Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of thy Law. This he asks as the richest boon of Divine Beneficence. This he implores, as the testimony that God will do well unto his servant, and thus enable him to live in faith and dependance upon the Divine Word. And to this last refuge he is prompted to turn, by the pressure of surrounding dangers, and the uncertain issue of the conflicts in which he is daily engaged.

Ver. 3—8. In the history of David's life, to which it is so often necessary to turn in the exposition of the Psalms, we find an ample explanation of the terms of the complaint here uttered:—I am a stranger upon earth! The enforced wanderings and consequent personal dangers of the son of Jesse, both before and after his exaltation to the throne of Israel, must have deeply impressed on his soul the despondent feelings of an outcast: but in all the vicissitudes of his experience we hear him imploring the Almighty for spiritual strength; that strength which may be derived only from the knowledge of God's laws, and the grace given to observe them. But he felt

the need on his own part of good resolutions, and of a fervent desire to persevere in practical obedience:—Hide not thy commandments from me: my soul hath always a longing after thy judgments: and I have kept thy testimonies. I have seen, O Lord, that Thou hast rebuked the proud, and that they who set at naught thy commandments are accursed in thy sight. O turn from me the shame and rebuke, that are the necessary consequences of rebellion against thy laws: let me not hereafter be seduced by faithlessness or by fear from following after thy testimonies: for though princes have been my adversaries, Thou knowest that the thoughts of thy servant have been occupied in thy statutes; that thy testimonies are my delight; and that I flee unto them as my counsellors, in every extremity to which thy just Providence sees good to expose me.

PART iv.—*Daleth.*

Ver. 1. Here is an appearance of despondency, occasioned by some great strait in which the Psalmist was struggling. Besides the general promises of God to sustain those who call upon Him in their afflictions, He had given to David peculiar and personal promises: to these the suffering fugitive seems to appeal, when he says, O quicken me according to thy Word; that is, according to thy promise. The most remarkable upon record, is that relating to the birth of Christ by the prophet Isaiah:—Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth, even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.

Ver. 2—8. The remainder of this portion consists of prayer and pledges of obedience. David had accustomed himself, from past experience of the Divine Goodness, to draw arguments of faith and hope for the coming time. Here is an example—

I have acknowledged my ways, and Thou heardest me. Surely, brethren, if in answer to our prayers, we have been rescued from the power of any evil—and I should hope none are without this experience—we have strong reason to implore the grace that shall henceforth preserve us in the way of righteousness. Such was the Psalmist's example: he had confessed his faults, he had prayed, and he had been heard: he therefore supplicates the continuance of divine illumination, understanding, and comfort; and emphatically, that he may be freed from the example and influence of falsehood: for so must we understand the words, *Take from me the way of lying.* He had had much experience of the falsehood prevailing in the world, and had suffered much from its encouragement, in the court and councils of the malicious Saul: and under these sufferings his soul melted away for very trouble. But as the morning's dawn chases away the gloom of night, so does the inward and expanding light of a good man's conscience, dispel the gloom that gathers around him from the inflictions of evil tongues. It imparts not only present comfort, but increasing strength, and confidence, and resolution. It enables him to review the past scenes of his pilgrimage, and spreads over them the lights and shadows of peaceful repose. And the retrospect confirms his heart in the satisfactory assurance, that having chosen the way of truth, and stuck to the testimonies of his God, under the severest trials of his faith and patience; in exile, in bondage, and in peril; his soul would be endued with much strength to run in the way of the holy commandments, whenever his heart should be set at liberty.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE XLIX.

PSALM 119.

PART V.—*He.*

Ver. 1—8. The whole of this long Psalm consists of alternations of prayer, confession, and vows; and almost every single part is an epitome of the whole. Whatever there is of evil among men proceeds from their natural ignorance and their correspondent mental darkness; wherefore the discriminating Christian will pray for the illumination of the Holy Spirit, as his only guidance towards the understanding of the perfect Law of the Lord. For, as St. Paul argues, (1 *Cor.* ii, 14,) The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. David was deeply conscious of this natural blindness, the disease entailed by our original corruption; therefore he implores of the Almighty the gift of understanding, that he may comprehend the divine statutes, that he may keep them with his whole heart. It is under that consciousness of natural inability, that he prays to be constrained, to be *made* to go in the paths of the commandments; feeling, that notwithstanding his desire is therein, his own unaided strength is insufficient. The meaning of this brief sentence is honestly and beautifully amplified in the Apostle's confession:—I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not: for the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. What the Apostle delivers to others in the shape of argument and exhorta-

tion, the Psalmist breathes forth for himself in the spirit of prayer; that his heart may be devoted to the study of the divine testimonies; that his eyes may be averted from every temptation to follow vanity; that his spirit may be quickened in the way of righteousness, until it be finally established therein; the great end and aim of all these desires being implied in the summary prayer, that he may be made habitually to fear the Lord. For the succeeding passage betrays a consciousness of some past sin or folly, for which he dreads the reproach of his enemies, or peradventure the anger of the Almighty: to whose mercy he nevertheless commits himself, as he did upon the memorable occasion, when the divine wrath was kindled against Israel, and David was moved to number the people:—Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; and let me not fall into the hand of man! It is clear, then, that upon both these occasions he was actuated by the same confidence, assured that whatever be the judgments of the Lord, they are good. He concludes by a renewal of the profession of his delight in God's commandments, with the repetition of the prayer that he may be quickened in the work of obedience to them.

PART vi.—*Vau*.

Ver. 1—8. Though in this portion of the Psalm, David seems to have had respect chiefly to temporal blessings and promises; yet the prayer and the objects of the prayer are so strictly evangelical in their spirit, that the Christian cannot reflect upon them without feeling them applicable to his own position as a covenanted heir of Grace, under the Gospel dispensation. In this light, therefore, we may most profitably meditate upon them. The prayer evidences that fervency of soul, which marks every utterance of the kind throughout the Book of Psalms; a distinction which stamps their perpetual value, not only as exemplary lessons, but also as contagious

(so to speak) of the feelings which prompted them: for the heart is the seat of feeling, and no prayer can be sincere which is not felt. And to excite this fervency, we must be assured of the value of the gifts which we implore. The very style of David's supplications indicates his just appreciation of the objects of his prayers—they are brief, abrupt, earnest, importunate, as though called forth by the sense of some urgent need: and what are the objects of his supplications? They are the things of all time and of eternity—the blessings which constitute the life of life; the graces that shall disarm death of his sting, and deprive the grave of its victory. He asks for the knowledge and guidance of the Word of Truth; for the understanding of the divine commandments, and testimonies, and statutes; for the protection of those righteous judgments which are his truest safeguard against the designs of his enemies; for that liberty which exists not, but where the Spirit of the Lord is; and for that firmness in the cause of Truth, which shall enable him to advocate its eternal claims even in the presence of kings. The statutes, the commandments, and the testimonies, are here used as convertible terms, all signifying the perfect Law of the Lord. Here the Psalmist records his solemn vow, that if his prayer for the gifts he enumerates shall be answered, he will henceforth and for ever, devote himself to the study and observance of that law; it is the fountain from which he will seek his highest enjoyments; it shall be the subject of his most earnest study: it shall minister to his truest delight: for that he has already experienced the pleasures derived from communion with the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of the divine commandments, until he has acquired a lasting love for them. That love he also vows to manifest in suitable acts of adoration; for where the heart is warmed by the expressed sentiment of the lips, the hands will not be slow to proclaim their part in the duties of devotion:—My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments.

PART vii.—*Zain*.

Ver. 1—8. Here is a greater variety of subject matters in this portion of the Psalm than in the preceding one. The thoughts of David are not often wholly expended upon himself; but his personal prayer sometimes naturally leads him to contrast his own hopes, and the foundation on which he builds those hopes, with the condition of some around him, who serve not, who fear not, who know not God. In this division of the Psalm we have an instance. His thoughts, as usual, spring forth on the wings of prayer, and are thus enabled to take a prospective range, embracing many diverse objects. His own condition, often one of imminent peril or of severe trial, from the active or passive hostility of ungodly men, claims his leading aspirations towards the mercy-seat; and he implores the manifestation of the divine goodness on his own behalf, in accordance with the promises he had received: to this he is evidently urged by the pressure of some present provocation, not at all uncommon to the experience of the best of men:—The proud have had me exceedingly in derision. The trials of the spirit are frequently harder to be borne than those of the flesh; and are fitter subjects for the prayer of faith, as being remediable only by the beneficent skill of the great Physician of our souls. David therefore pleads the divine promises, as the ground of his hope of deliverance:—O think upon thy servant as concerning thy word; for in that word I repose all my confidence: I have experienced its faithfulness in many extremities, and by that experience Thou hast caused me to put my trust therein: it is my comfort in every trouble; it is the support of my life; it is the quickener (or strengthener) of my spirit. For under the severest inflictions of the pride and malice of ungodly foes, I have maintained thy law, I have remembered thine everlasting judgments, and I have received comfort. But, Lord, what can

be their hope who forsake thy law? I am horribly afraid for the ungodly, when I reflect upon their doom. Whereas all my peace and joy, even in the house, (that is, in the various hiding places,) of my painful pilgrimage, and in the fearful hours of surrounding darkness, have sprung from thy statutes. They have been the subjects of grateful praise, even the themes of perpetual songs in the night-season, when I have thought upon thy Name. And this happy experience didst Thou vouchsafe to me, because I kept thy law, and observed thy commandments. "As one sin is often the consequence and the punishment of another, so one act of obedience is the issue and the reward of another; and to him who hath well used the grace already received, shall more be given."* This I had, because I kept thy commandments.

PART viii.—*Cheth.*

Ver. 1—8. Notwithstanding the similarity of style in every division of this lengthened Psalm, there is in each a variation which makes it independent of the rest. Each separate portion is an instructive hymn: it is instruction impressed by example, and recorded and preserved for our learning, for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the Church, which is the body of Christ; till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man. It is, I say, as an example of piety, a still living example, that David so impressively appeals to our judgment and affections, in language which is at once of the simplest and most elevated order. It is the effusion of a pure heart, unelaborated through any artificial medium: it savours not of the atmosphere of the philosopher's study: it is the general exhalation of a spirit already breathing at liberty on the confines of heaven, and anticipating the more perfect glory

* Bp. Horne.

which is yet to be revealed: such is the dower of faith. Nothing less than this could have prompted the confident expression with which this division of the Psalm opens: the suppliant had received the last best gift of God—the love of God in his heart:—Thou art my portion, O Lord. But he shrinks not from acknowledging his use of the means of grace: he does not attribute his experience of the divine favour to an uncovenanted partiality. I have promised to keep thy law; I have poured out my whole heart in prayer in thy Presence, in reliance upon thy mercy according to thy word; I have sought Thee by repentance and in tears, when I called to remembrance my own ways, and reflected upon their sinfulness. Then, however, as Thou, Lord, knowest, did I turn my feet unto thy testimonies; and with no laggard will, no halting between two opinions; but I made haste, and prolonged not the time, to keep thy commandments. Surely, brethren, as we are all sinners, we need no stronger call to repentance, no brighter example of its efficacy, than this. The teaching of the Psalmist is not merely preceptive: he does not merely instruct us in lessons of virtue and true wisdom, and bid us, Do this, and thou shalt live. He places himself before our thoughts in the attitudes of humiliation, adoration, and supplication; and points to the crown of his own achieved glory, for our encouragement and support in the great task of working out our own salvation, though like himself we may not accomplish it but with fear and trembling:—Thou *art* my portion, O Lord! For there is scarcely any one section of this long Psalm which does not contain an allusion to some passing trouble, some affliction imposed upon the spirit of the writer by impious enemies; and yet he appeals to the Searcher of hearts upon his own unshaken integrity, his own determination to perseverance:—The congregations of the ungodly have robbed me; but I have not forgotten thy law, neither will I neglect thy service, which alone is perfect freedom: for even at midnight will I arise to

give thanks unto Thee, in full dependance on the continued experience of thy righteous judgments in behalf of thy servant: neither in the day-time will I expose myself to the corruption of sinful men; for my delight is in the companionship of all them that fear Thee: and when from the privacy of communion with my own thoughts, I look abroad upon the evidences of thy power and loving-kindness, as displayed in the sight of all thy creatures, I am constrained to feel and confess that the earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy; and my adoring spirit hath only a fervent desire to retain thy favour by a life of faith and obedience. Earnestly therefore do I repeat my daily supplication, that Thou wilt teach me thy statutes.

PART IX.—*Teth.*

Ver. 1—8. Here is an acknowledgment of personal benefits received; and it would seem from the tenour of what follows, that these benefits were administered in the shape of correction. Yet the pious David owns that in this dispensation the Lord had dealt graciously with him; and that this was no less in accordance with the divine promises, than the most gratifying experience of immediate and unmingled good. And such will ever be the feeling of those, to whom is imparted the gift of faith in the all-pervading love of God to his creature, man; for He verily chasteneth us for our profit, that we may be cleansed and purified in the fires of affliction, and may finally become partakers of his holiness; that degree of temporal perfection, without which no man shall see the Lord. Over and over again, the Psalmist confesses, I have believed thy commandments, I have remembered thy law, I have kept thy word: he nevertheless feels, that as often as he has gone astray, it has been through the want of a due understanding, a more perfect knowledge of their purity, their healthful influences, their restraining power. For he acknowledges that in his ignorance

he went wrong, and that it was only by timely correction he had been restored to integrity of action. In my wanderings from the narrow way prescribed by the divine law I was troubled: but now have I kept thy word. It is therefore good for me that I have been in trouble: for it has turned my heart towards thy statutes; it has renewed in me an earnest desire to learn them: and because I know, O Lord, that Thou art good and gracious, I implore Thee of thy mercy to impart to my soul the light and guidance and instruction of thy Holy Spirit:—O teach me thy statutes! “There are certain duties, most important to the perfection of the Christian character, which can be practised only in affliction; namely, patience and submission in distress and suffering; a stedfast maintenance of our confidence in God and his final goodness, even at a time when every thing present is adverse and discouraging. The possession of this temper is almost the perfection of our nature: but it is possessed then only, when put to the trial. In a life made up of pleasure and gratification, the spirit of a man is not thus tested. It is in the chamber of sickness; under the strokes of affliction; amidst the pangs of want, the groans of pain, the pressures of infirmity; in grief, in misfortune, through gloom and terror; that it will be seen whether we hold fast our trust and confidence in God; and whether these will produce in us resignation and submission.”* But notwithstanding his strong faith, the Psalmist complains of his adversaries, that they slander him; and this, because of the pride engendered in their hearts by undisturbed prosperity, in which is implied a contrast with his own humble and dependant condition. He derives courage, however, from the consciousness of his own deep and habitual delight in the law of the Lord; and comparing the spiritual state of his proud oppressors with his own, he concludes with the grateful acknowledgment, that that law is dearer to his heart than thousands of gold and silver.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

* Archdeacon Paley.

LECTURE L.

PSALM 119.

PART X.—*Jod.*

Ver. 1—8. This portion of the Psalm opens with a pious acknowledgment, that as God is the Creator to whom we owe our vast superiority over every other work of his hands, so it is our duty to adore Him in the exercise of these distinguishing gifts. Our intellectual powers alone are the medium through which we can acquire that knowledge of the Nature, Character, and Attributes of the Deity, which is denied to all other creatures of this world, the earth; as we are made only a little lower than the Angels; and to us is made known the Way, the Truth, and the Life, by which we may become partakers, with those exalted spirits, of the bliss which they enjoy in the kingdom of their Father and our Father, of their God and our God. And, as the Psalmist here intimates, it is not the mere possession of these higher faculties that qualifies man for the attainment and enjoyment of the glories prepared for him; but the proper use of them, under the illumination and guidance of God's Holy Spirit. Wherefore he prays for the divine enlargement of his understanding, that he may become capable of knowing, and delighting in, and obeying God's holy commandments. And it is not exclusively with a view to his own individual happiness that he thus prays; but with the pious hope, that his example may be influential upon those around him; and more especially upon those, whose hearts having already imbibed the wholesome fear of God, will be glad and rejoice with him in the enlargement of the communion of Saints upon

the earth. They will glory in the fellowship of one, who having experienced so largely of the divine judgments, whether in his humiliation or his exaltation, whether in the time of trouble or of triumph; and who had manifested his unchanging trust in the faithfulness of God, even under his severest chastisements. For amidst all the changes and chances of this mortal life, which had fallen to his own lot, the Psalmist implores of the Almighty, that the remembrance of his all-pervading loving-kindness may be the ever-present comfort of his own soul; and that those mercies, of which he had already had so long and so large experience, may be continued unto him; that he might still live on, delighting in the law of the Lord, rejoicing in his judgments, and following his commandments. And moreover, in order that he may find no impediments to his determined course of faithfulness and obedience to the testimonies of the divine law; he prays that the proud, they who live and act in defiance of God's authority, as manifested in his Providence, and who go wickedly about to destroy him, solely on account of his righteous dealing, may be confounded in all their devices: while he desires earnestly to be preserved in unity of spirit with those who, like himself, regard the divine testimonies, and live in the fear of the Lord; beseeching the God of the spirits of all flesh, that his own heart may be preserved in unmoveable fidelity to the statutes and ordinances of the Lord; so that under whatever trials he may still be destined to bear, from the enmity and opposition of the wickedly proud man, he himself may ever be found occupied in fulfilling the divine commandments, and therefore not ashamed in the presence of his enemies.—Depend on it, my brethren, it is not in our frail nature to attain to any degree of strength, in our time of trouble and trial, equal to that which we may derive from the consciousness of having made, and still desiring to make, the law of our God the ruling principle of all our conduct in all our intercourse with the world. If we be maligned, or

oppressed, or otherwise ill-treated, by those who fear not God, nor regard his passing or his future judgments; yet if our heart be sound in his statutes, we shall not inwardly be ashamed.

PART xi.—*Caph.*

Ver. 1—8. Here is chiefly an outpouring of complaint, intermingled with prayer, and vows of continued stedfastness and perseverance in the hope that maketh not ashamed. The Bible translation of the first verse in this portion conveys a clearer meaning than that in our Prayer Book:—My soul fainteth for thy salvation: nevertheless I hope in thy Word. Many are the occasions when the faith of the true Christian may be affrighted from its propriety, while waiting for the manifestation of the loving-kindness of the Lord in his behalf, under the weight of any present affliction; but he needs only to resort to the divine promises made in the written Word, in order to re-establish his faith, and derive comfort to his soul. And to us, brethren, this is a much easier task, as we have a more ready help, and stronger assurances in the Gospel of our Saviour, than any to be derived from the Old Testament Dispensation, albeit this was a Dispensation of Truth—but it was Truth veiled in the mystery of prophecy. Upon us the light hath shined; for in the Person of the Son of God, all His attributes have been revealed in their fullest splendour: the life and immortality, which were only dimly foreshadowed to the patriarchs and prophets of old, have been brought to light before our eyes, by the Advent of the Messiah; of whose coming, Israel was permitted to enjoy only the long-deferred promise. Under this feeling, it must have been, that the Psalmist thus expresses himself, Mine eyes long sore for thy Word: O when wilt Thou comfort me? So peradventure it may be with the aged Christian—one who has had long experience of the trials, the sorrows, the afflictions of this life—the contradictions of sinners around

him, those who have digged pits for him which are contrary to the spiritual law of love—with such a one, who throughout his days has maintained, by the assistance of divine grace, his faith unshaken; whose heart is still sound in the statutes of his Redeemer, though his life has fallen into the sear and yellow leaf, and Nature stands trembling on the verge of eternity—with such a one, I say, it may be, that while

Faith builds a bridge from this world to the next
O'er Death's dark gulf, and all its horror hides,

his soul may be impatient for its flight; impatient of delay in the fulfilment, the completion, the enjoyment of those divine promises, which have been its refuge in every earthly tyranny and trial. He too may indulge in that seeming tone of despondency adopted by the pious Israelite—Mine eyes long sore for thy Word: O when wilt Thou comfort me? How many are the days of thy servant? that is, Lord, how long a period of probation hast Thou allotted me on earth? When wilt Thou be avenged of them that persecute me? When wilt Thou deliver thy servant from the power of his enemies? When wilt Thou admit my soul into thy Presence, among the spirits of the just made perfect, to partake of thine eternal salvation? But, continues the Psalmist, as if falling back upon the refuge of his own strong faith, All thy commandments are true: Thou wilt be my helper, as Thou hast been, under all the persecutions I have sustained, even until my foes had almost made an end of me: for to Thee, O my God, it is known that I forsook not thy commandments. On these do I still rely for acceptance with Thee, if Thou wilt graciously quicken me after the manner of thy wonted loving-kindness: for so shall I be enabled by thy saving grace to keep the testimonies of thy mouth. The day will come, my brethren, upon us all, that shall try our spirits, whether they be of God; and happy will it be for as many of us, as shall be supported in that awful crisis of our mortal na-

ture, by the firm consciousness, that amidst its frailties and infirmities, and the temptations and provocations we have sustained, the fear of the Lord has co-operated with his preventing grace, so as to inspire the sure and certain hope, that we shall be partakers of the redemption wrought for us by Christ Jesus our Lord.

PART xii.—*Lamed.*

Ver. 1—8. This portion of the Psalm opens with an act of devotional contemplation of the faithfulness, and power, and majesty of the Creator, as manifested alike in his Word and in his works. In the history of the Creation we are told, that God saw or looked upon everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good: for by his word, that is, by the exercise of his will, all things were formed, that are in Heaven or in the earth. They rest, therefore, on the firm basis of eternal power, exercised under the guidance of all-perfect wisdom.

Pois'd on its centre by his hand,
Earth long has stood, and yet shall stand:—

For all things obey the sovereign power of their Maker, and the order which He has established for their guidance and governance. That which He hath ordained is far beyond and above the influence of man: for the word or law of the Lord endureth for ever in heaven; and the truth of his decrees is manifested to the understanding of the children of men, from one generation to another; and all things continue until this day according to his ordinance, by reason of the potency of his Will subduing all things to a willing and unbroken course of obedience. It was under these reflections, that the Psalmist was led to consider his own dependance upon the Lord of Life and Glory for his creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; and he gratefully acknowledges (and herein is an act of strong faith)

that he traces his own prolonged experience of the divine favour, to that love for him which he had propitiated by his constancy in obedience—If my delight had not been in thy law, I should have perished in my trouble. All my own natural strength would have been paralyzed and rendered useless, while my foes surrounded me on every side, if I could not have looked to the God of my salvation, as my ever-present help in time of trouble; or if I had not regarded my own faithfulness to his commandments as the condition of my acceptance with Him. How naturally therefore do these reflections lead the pious mind of the Psalmist to a renewed determination, still to abide in the path of duty; still to repose on the faithfulness of his God, for continued protection and final deliverance: still to keep in view, as his guiding star, the pure and perfect law of his Creator and Redeemer. I will never forget thy commandments: for with them Thou hast quickened me. The knowledge of these hath restored my soul from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness; and Thou hast rewarded me with peace in believing that I am thine; and that Thou wilt save me, because I have sought thy commandments. For while the ungodly laid their snare for me, to destroy me, thy testimonies were ever uppermost in my thoughts: by them have I been taught to consider that all the devices and desires of ungodly men come to nought; that they themselves come to an end in such an hour as they are not aware of, and then all their thoughts perish; and their meditated destruction of thy servants shall vanish into an empty dream. For thy commandment is exceeding broad: beneath its sacred operation, thy chosen ones find shelter from the assaults of every spiritual and mortal enemy; and run to and fro in the earth, in the possession of that liberty with which Thou hast made them free. Neither the arrows of Satan, nor the pestilence of sin, shall smite the heart of the righteous: innumerable foes shall fall around him, on his right hand and his left; but the thunderbolts of thy hot

displeasure shall not come nigh him. The decrees of the God of Abraham are from everlasting, and unchangeable: He hath promised his blessing to all that call upon Him, yea, all that call upon him faithfully; and from the oath that He hath sworn unto the father of the faithful, He will not shrink; for his word endureth for ever in Heaven, the imperishable throne of his eternal Majesty.

PART XIII.—*Mem.*

Ver. 1—8. The Psalmist here justifies the warmth of his devotedness to the law of his God, by a confession of the superiority in wisdom which his study and observance of that law had given him above his enemies, as well as above those who would fain be his teachers. For the spirit of the Lord, as related in the first book of Samuel, had fallen upon David, from the day of his anointing to be king over Israel. The character of David throughout his varied life, as it is fully set forth in the Old Testament histories, affords a fair specimen of the frailties of our common humanity: but we see in the Book of Psalms, as in a mirror, the reflection of his inmost soul; the all-pervading and all-conquering piety which survived the wreck of many a hostile assault, from temptations within and trials without. There is scarcely a character upon record, in which is manifested so fully the infection of original sin, and the power of divine grace in cleansing and restoring our polluted nature to its original brightness. All those beauties of the divine image with which man was endowed at his creation, and which we are now accustomed to speak of as Christian graces, adorn the character of the son of Jesse—sullied, it is true; but still visible and resplendent—and above all, that holy love, which the Apostle Paul declares is the fulfilling of the Divine Law. This portion of the Psalm now under consideration appeals to the Searcher of hearts for the sincerity of David's profession:

it is no pharisaical submission of his feelings to the judgment of his fellow-man : in the nakedness of his integrity he prostrates himself before the all-piercing eye of the God of the spirits of all flesh—Lord, how I love thy law ! all the day long is my study in it. We are not to interpret this expression as conveying the idea that the king of Israel enshrined himself perpetually in his closet, poring over the written testimonies of the Lord in monkish meditation ; but that, having them imprinted on his heart, he made them the all-ruling law of his conduct, in the various duties of his exalted station, and under the manifold trials of his spirit which that station entailed upon him ; and that from them he drew that wisdom which qualified him for those arduous duties. They were ever uppermost in his thoughts, they controlled all his actions, they dictated all his sovereign decrees : in short, as he confesses, they were ever with him. By them his understanding was enlightened and enlarged, and his wisdom exceeded that of the aged counsellors who surrounded him : and he humbly attributes his superior gifts to the loving-kindness of God towards him, because he had kept the divine commandments, and refrained his feet from every evil way, that he might still be enabled to persevere in the narrow path of duty. Neither, says he, have I shrunk from thy judgments : I feel and acknowledge the value of that severe discipline by which Thou hast tried my soul, and by which I have been taught to know Thee, and to rejoice in thy law. For now are all thy commandments productive of more delight than the richest luxuries of nature : they are sweet unto my throat ; yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth : for through them I get understanding ; and by that light am I resolved and enabled to shun all evil ways. Now, brethren, allow me to caution you not to retire from your brief contemplation of this glowing picture of a pious heart, as if it were preserved only to excite your admiration. The record of David's example is written for our learning and for our imita-

tion ; and while its preservation to this day imposes upon us a responsibility, its yoke is neither uneasy, nor its burthen heavy. Be assured that there is joy and peace in believing : for faith is the substance of things hoped for ; it is the anticipation, the possession beforehand, of all that the immortal spirit craves, to assure it of that never-changing blessedness, which it is instinctively conscious of a capacity to attain and to enjoy ; and which is confirmed to it by the eternal promise of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ : for though Heaven and earth pass away, his Word shall not pass away.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE LI.

PSALM 119.

PART XIV. — *Nun.*

Ver. 1. This life is often spoken of as a journey through a wilderness, beset with thorns and briars, trials and temptations, the terminus of which is the Heavenly Canaan, the lot of our inheritance, if we persevere in the narrow way which leadeth thereunto. The ministers of Divine Grace are, like Moses and Aaron, the humble conductors of the elect people of God on their perilous journey. Yet could not we proceed in safety or with hope, but for the presence of the Holy Spirit, illuminating our path, and alternately shielding us from our spiritual enemy; as the pillar of the cloud accompanied the camp of the Israelites, giving light by night to them, but spreading darkness around the footsteps of their pursuers. We are no longer encouraged to look for visible miracles of Almighty Power, though every mercy is a miracle of Divine Grace. But we have the sure Word of God ever at hand for our guidance and instruction; and it is by our own wilful refusal to avail ourselves of this light, if we stumble or fall. It is that Word which the Psalmist confesses to be a lantern unto his feet, and a light unto his paths.

Ver. 2—8. Alternate vows and prayers make up this portion of the entire Psalm; and herein is a practical illustration of the duties imposed upon Christians by the gift of the Holy Scriptures, and the wisdom, that is, the light we derive from them. Human nature is plunged in the darkness of ignorance, because by its own unconverted will, it refuses all guidance but

that of its natural reason, and therefore stumbles upon many errors of vice and superstition. Against this danger the Psalmist resolves to avail himself of the divine light vouchsafed in Holy Writ. We also are sworn, we are pledged by our baptismal vows, to keep the righteous judgment of our God : to renounce the works of darkness ; to eschew all unholy desires, so that we will not follow nor be led by them ; to obey God's holy will and commandments, by walking in them all the days of our life. It may be that at various stages of our earthly pilgrimage we are troubled above measure : so were the Israelites in their journeyings ; yet were they protected, preserved, delivered. If our experience be that of David, let his wisdom also be our example : he prayed for the quickening influence, that is, the re-animating, invigorating presence of God's Holy Spirit, so to instruct him in the judgments of the Lord, that his spiritual oblations, the free-will offerings of his mouth, should be acceptable at the Mercy Seat. For that not only was his life in frequent danger, from the enmity of surrounding foes, but even his soul was in peril from the snares of ungodliness that lay in his daily path. Such is the meaning of the elegant metaphor—My soul is always in my hand. Against the fear of these adversaries, his own faithfulness to the law, the commandments, and testimonies of the Lord, had been hitherto the stay of the Psalmist's trust in the divine protection, and had therefore proved the very joy of his heart ; so that he was fully resolved to fulfil them always, even unto the end.

PART XV.—*Samech.*

Ver. 1—3. A strong contrast is observable between the vehement expressions used in the opening of this portion of the Psalm, and the humility of spirit which seems to have dictated the remaining passages. Nothing is so likely to stir the indignation of an honest heart, as the discovery of evil doings,

imagined, and designed, and effected, by secret treachery. They are evidences of an evil heart of unbelief, not to be reflected upon without stirring up the Divinity that is within us—the little drop of noble blood which escaped the contamination of the poison of original sin. Our better nature revolts at it, and the wisest and most virtuous will ever be the most earnest in the expressions of their abhorrence of it. I hate them that imagine evil things: away from me, ye wicked! The upright soul of David prompts his pen to record his feelings of disgust, in language that admits no doubt of his sincerity. From each outburst of his indignant reflections, however, the Psalmist turns to the source of his own consolation and confidence:—I will keep the commandments of my God; my trust is in his word; his law do I love; for He is my defence and my shield.

Ver. 4—8. Dependance upon an unseen and Almighty Protector, if it is sincere, cannot be maintained without prayer, and the acknowledgment of such confidence by the lips. Prayer is the indication that we do not trust in our own strength to resist evil, however diligent we may be in the study of the laws and commandments of God. For this reason the Psalmist follows up the avowal of his determination, by supplicating the divine aid to establish him in it; lest by falling away to temptation he should be disappointed of his hope. This is a useful lesson to those who, trusting in themselves that they are righteous, that is, miraculously saved beyond all future danger of lapsing into sin, feel themselves at liberty to indulge their own vain imaginations, even in such things, as in their sight are evidences of the reprobation of others. Their charity, like their faith, is of a peculiar fashion. The truly pious king of Israel, however, repudiates this false confidence: he believes his final safety to depend on the continual support of his God. Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe; for then my delight shall be ever in thy statutes. As for those who imagine deceit, those

who trust in false doctrines and lying divinations, still departing from thy statutes, which require good works as the fruits of a living faith, Thou hast trodden them down; Thou puttest them away like dross: therefore, I love thy testimonies, the laws which Thou hast given for our guidance in the way of righteousness, or practical godliness: for, seeing thy judgments upon the hypocrites who cry, Lord, Lord, yet strive not to obey thy will; my flesh trembleth for fear of Thee, lest I also should provoke those judgments. The love of thy law is the support and consolation of my being; but the wholesome dread of thy displeasure is the bond of my obedience. Therefore, O Lord, establish me according to thy word: hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe.

PART XVI.—*Ain.*

Ver. 1—8. Notwithstanding the frequency with which many passages of the same meaning recur in this lengthened hymn of adoration, they always appear clothed with some new grace. The opening passage to this portion of the Psalm has its parallel in many others; but though similar, it is not the same. David appeals to God upon those matters which can be known only to Him, and always with an earnest tone of conscious rectitude. The language in which these appeals are made, if addressed by man to his fellow-men, would be deemed vain and presumptuous: but none will dare to offer unto the Searcher of hearts, the boast of integrity of which he is not deeply conscious; and least of all can we suppose the righteous David to have been thus daring. For as in our Lord's parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, it might have been perfectly true that the Pharisee fasted twice a week, and paid tithes of all that he possessed; yet was the Publican commended, for that he had in honest simplicity confessed himself a sinner. This, as the pure offering of the heart, could be neither more nor less

acceptable to the God of Truth, than the Psalmist's pleading his own righteousness and lawful dealings, to propitiate the divine protection against his oppressors. There are many passages throughout the Psalms, wherein David confesses his sinfulness, and supplicates the unconditional mercy of God. But here we see him imploring the divine protection from his oppressors, against whom he has no equal strength to contend; and boldly contrasts his own faithfulness with the falsehood of those rebellious Israelites, who professed that they knew God, but in works denied Him; being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. And if we pass on to the 6th verse of this portion, it will be evident he had yet stronger reasons for thus pleading his own comparative deserving of the divine aid in his personal extremity, than the mere enmity to himself of his oppressors:—It is time for Thee, Lord, to lay to thine hand: for they have destroyed thy Law. The enemies of David were the despisers and the enemies of Truth; and in their wild endeavours to overthrow his government, they aimed at the destruction of the divine laws; the annihilation of all religious ordinances, as established by the Lord Jehovah Himself; and the desecration of the holy Temple—Down with it, down with it, even to the ground! The Psalmist, therefore, identifies his own cause with that of religion itself. And we have had experience in our own country, that a successful rebellion against a righteous monarch, had well nigh uprooted the religious establishment of the kingdom, to make way for the domination of the boldest system of hypocrisy and blasphemy that ever yet sprung from the madness of the people. Against the attempts of the anarchy of ungodliness in his day, the Psalmist warmly protests his love to the divine commandments beyond all worldly wealth, and his utter abhorrence of the false ways of his adversaries. This is the plain duty of every individual in a Christian land; for so numerous are the seductions of false prophets and self-appointed teachers, acting under

the dishonest plea of liberty of conscience, as they interpret it, each according to his own selfish views; that the humble Christian has need to use every caution, lest these deceivers should spoil him, as the Apostle's phrase is, through vulgar philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. St. Paul's fear for his disciples at Colosse was, lest any man should beguile them with enticing words; which is a proof that, in the earliest age of the Gospel dispensation, there were persons who made a gain of their godliness, by pretending to a superior light, or to a greater degree of sanctity, than the Apostles themselves; thus leading captive unstable souls. Against such deceivers, it is the duty of the Christian Ministry to warn their hearers that they take heed, lest they also be so ensnared.

PART xvii.—*Pe.*

Ver. 1—8. As the entire Book of Psalms was dictated by a prayerful spirit, we may not wonder that so many portions of it are exclusively made up of the language of praise and adoration. Such is the character of this part of the 119th Psalm. It opens with an expression of the deepest admiration of the divine testimonies; that is, the proofs or evidences to be seen in the written Law, and in the works of Providence, that the Lord Jehovah ruleth and over-ruleth in all things. To every one who reflects upon the course of his own life, and compares his experience with whatever knowledge he may have acquired of religious truths, these testimonies must appear wonderful. They are the source of all knowledge and of all wisdom worth attaining; and ought to inspire our souls with that firm decision adopted by the Psalmist:—Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them: for he confesses that when the Word of Truth goeth forth, when it enters into the heart of man, pervading all his frame, arousing his dull consciousness,

and stimulating him to reflection, it giveth light and understanding even to the simple. Such unquestionably is the true character of all Holy Writ; for whether we study the historical books, recording God's dealings with his creatures; or the preceptive parts written for our guidance; or the doctrinal parts vouchsafed to animate in us the naturally imperfect hope of eternal glory; all the works of man's wisdom shrink to nothing in the comparison. The products of the human mind, be they the fruits of diligent study and profound learning, gathered for our mutual instruction; or be they the glowing inventions of a gifted imagination; whether perused for edification or for mere amusement; all are but as the fitting gleams of the summer lightning upon our benighted path, as contrasted with the illumination of revealed truths, pure, permanent, and unextinguishable; and, like a setting sun, shedding its brightest hues over the point of our final destiny—the haven where we would be. And when speaking of these testimonies, how simply and naturally does the Psalmist express his feeling of their inestimable value:—I opened my mouth, and drew in my breath: for my delight was in thy commandments.

The force of *feeling* could no farther go:

and he betakes himself to earnest prayer, that he may be enabled by the Spirit of Grace to walk in the steps of God's holy commandments; that he may thus propitiate the mercy of his God; that by grace he may expel the dominion of wickedness from his own soul; and that by the watchful care of God's Providence he may suffer no temporal harm from the wrongful dealings of men: acknowledging at the same time, how deeply he compassionated the ungodly, who would not keep the law of the Lord, but set at nought all his counsel, and would none of his reproof.

PART xviii.—*Tzaddi*.

Ver. 1, 2. The inference to be drawn from the tenor of these words is, that the Psalmist had been turning in his own mind the great discrepancies sometimes observable, between the characters of earthly rulers and the laws established by their authority, for the government of their respective people. They who are the most virtuously disposed are frail and fallible; and therefore liable to err, even with the best intentions. On the other hand, wicked rulers may sometimes promulgate righteous laws, because they think them best adapted to promote their own personal ambition. But the sacred penman extols the judgments and testimonies of the Lord as exceeding righteous and true, for that in Him is neither variableness nor shadow of turning. It is recorded of the Emperor Mauritius, who lived in the sixth century, that when reduced to bondage by a blood-thirsty conqueror, who slew his children before his face, he exclaimed, Righteous art Thou, O Lord, and true are thy judgments! an evidence of religious faith not unworthy of a record in the brightest page of Martyrology; and are among thousands of proofs, of the value of these sacred compositions, as lessons of reflective and practical piety.

Ver. 3—8. The remainder of this 18th portion of the Psalm is occupied in reflections on the personal experience of the writer, the perfectness of the divine commandments and testimonies, and his own zealous devotedness to them in all the changing scenes of life. Herein, indeed, lies the chief excellence of all the inspired and sacred writings, which have been preserved for our learning; that they are a lantern to our feet, and a light unto our paths, under whatever degree of darkness it may be our destiny to pass the perilous waves of this world. We cannot estimate their value, unless we should for a season be totally deprived of them. David had frequently experienced

this privation, and therefore was proportionably zealous in the defence and preservation of the Law and of the Testimony. And this exposed him to many sufferings from the ungodly, those who had forgotten the commandments of Jehovah. This interprets the phrase—My zeal hath even consumed me. There is a parallel passage in the 69th Psalm, which is quoted in St. John's Gospel, as having been remembered by the disciples of our Lord, when He provoked the enmity of the Jews, by driving the pedlars and the money-changers out of the Temple:—Take these things hence: make not my Father's house an house of merchandise! Zeal is the perfection of holy love; and in us it never can be forced into action, unless by the strong conviction, that the righteousness of the divine testimonies is unchangeable and everlasting. Our understanding of them, however, depends not upon our mere diligence in the study of them, though this is indispensable; but upon the illumination of our minds by the Holy Spirit, in answer to our inward desires and expressed prayers; and that illumination is the earnest of our eternal salvation. Such was the faith of the Psalmist—O grant me understanding, and *I shall live!*

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE LII.

PSALM 119.

PART XIX.—*Koph.*

Ver. 1—3. As the Lord Jehovah is the Creator and Sovereign Ruler of our spirits, as well as of our fleshy tabernacles, and of all that influences either our spiritual or temporal condition, it needs scarcely more than the guidance of our natural reason to convince us, that the prayer which goeth forth from feigned lips, the object and the subjects of which are not fixed in the heart, cannot be an acceptable offering at the throne of the Majesty of Heaven and Earth. When pleading with his God for the needful mercies and blessings of life, the Psalmist therefore casts himself, as it were, upon the Divine Omniscience, appealing to the sincerity of his prayer and his vow, as his claim (if we may so speak) for acceptance with his God. I call with my whole heart. I will keep thy statutes. Here is the vow of obedience. There is the confession of faith. Yet while thus calling upon the Lord, the humble suppliant relies not on his own unassisted strength for performing his vows, however earnestly or sincerely offered. He layeth his help upon One that is mighty—Help me, and I shall keep thy testimonies. And the ground of this confidence is the sure Word of God: therefore does he consecrate the earliest aspirations of his awakening spirit to the service and the praise of Him, whose ministering angels have guarded his hours of unconscious sleep, and to whose guidance he commits his goings, through the uncertain day.

Ver. 4, 5. These verses, in connexion with the preceding, convey a reproach or an encouragement, as the case may be—a

reproach to those whose hearts are so estranged from the thoughts of God, of his providential care, and of his all-needful grace, as never to awaken to restored life, and health, and hope, with a grateful sense and a humble acknowledgment, that they owe these blessings to the Giver of all good; while they can awake and live on from day to day, regardless of the power of his wrath. But how encouraging to the devout and practical believer is the example of the pious king of Israel! He confesses that his eyes prevent even the call of the watchman; that his very slumbers are impatient of the morning beams; that he waits not to be awakened by their influence: but that a pervading consciousness of the Divine Presence arouses him to a sense of his duty to his Creator and to himself; which is most effectually fulfilled, while his thoughts are occupied in the never-failing words of Divine Promise and Assurance. He brings his experience of the past also to strengthen his hope of the future: quicken me according as thou art wont.

Ver. 6—8. There are few of us, my brethren, who can engage in the duty of private prayer, without occasionally feeling that, whatever blessings may have crowned our lives, and called for our grateful adoration of Him who hath bestowed them, we have some enemy among our brethren in the flesh. And well is it for us, if like the Psalmist, we are conscious that our enemy, and not ourself, is the violator of God's law of love. For then may we rely upon the Divine protection against the severest persecution of human malice; knowing that the commandments of the Lord are true, and that his testimonies against the wicked, and in favour of the just, are grounded for ever.

PART XX.—*Resh.*

Ver. 1, 2. If we would aspire to a well-grounded confidence in the support and protection of our Heavenly Father, under

our temporal necessities ; and in the intercession of his blessed Son our Lord for the pardon of our sins, and our final acceptance ; we must not forget the condition of salvation—obedience to God's revealed Law. The doctrine of Christ's beloved disciple John is too plain and positive to be gainsayed by those whose profession of faith is the all in all of their religion. This favoured Evangelist says, Hereby we do know that we know God, if we keep his commandments : he that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. So the Holy David relies on the acceptance of his prayers of faith, because he does not forget the law of his God. And he further implores the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, that he may possess a yet stronger assurance of the divine deliverance from the power of his adversaries, both temporal and spiritual.

Ver. 3, 4. The meaning of the word health is not here confined to that which we usually give to it : otherwise the Psalmist would contradict himself when he says that a certain class of the wicked come in no misfortune like other folk ; they are not plagued like other men. In the eye of the world, the stream of life may run on smoothly with them ; but there is within, that which passeth shew. The soul's health is unknown to them—they have not God in all their thoughts—the peace of God ruleth not in their hearts—they are strangers to the quietude shed around by an approving conscience—the present life is the be-all and the end-all of their shallow reflection—they know only the vague hope that to-morrow shall be as this day, and more abundant—and every morrow within the reach of their imagination is coloured with only the delusive hope of added treasures and enjoyments—though they are conscious that all these things shall perish in their using. Therefore is health far from them, because they regard not the statutes of God. Here the Psalmist turns his thoughts inward

upon his own soul, conscious of his own natural infirmity, and in how great need he himself stands of Divine Mercy; repeating the confession of his past experience of the loving-kindness of the Lord, in the same words as used in the preceding division of this Psalm—Quicken me as Thou art wont.

Ver. 5, 6. There is scarcely a stronger temptation to sinful thoughts and actions, than the provocations of those who trouble and persecute us undeservedly; yet few of us can entirely escape this experience. It is an excellent preservative against a provocation to sin, to have a conscience void of offence; or as the familiar phrase is, to be on good terms with ourselves. This is to be obtained only by keeping in the narrow way which will lead us to everlasting life, in spite of every worldly obstruction. The history of David's life, from his youth upward, proves that at many successive periods of it he encountered many that did trouble him and persecute him; and that in thinking on the transgressors against his peace, he was more grieved that they should forsake the law of God, than for any suffering they could inflict upon himself. For he had put on the whole armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, and feared not what man could do unto him, while he himself wandered not from the way of righteousness, nor swerved from the testimonies of his God.

Ver. 7, 8. I wish, my brethren, we could one and all, cast ourselves at the footstool of the mercy-seat of Christ, with but a small portion of that consciousness of spiritual integrity herein manifested by the Psalmist: that under all our trials, in all our prayers for deliverance from evil, or for desirable blessings upon our daily existence, we could so confidently approach the throne of grace, with the earnest entreaty that God would minutely examine our hearts for the proofs grafted therein, of our love to his commandments. But, alas, we are more intent to hide the thoughts and imaginations of our hearts even from the eyes of our fellow men, than to implore the scrutiny of the

all-seeing eye for the justification of our lives. Yet is the Word of God true from everlasting; and in that word it is declared, that if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things; but if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

PART XXI.—*Schin.*

Ver. 1—4. David was an object of God's peculiar care from his youth; and he was therefore a mark for the enmity of princes, of some who had attained the highest position of human grandeur and power. Even Saul, who was so much indebted to the sling and the stone of the shepherd youth, for his protection from the Philistine foes of Israel, hated David in heart for his very virtues. But when the latter became king by divine appointment, he could not forget the many evidences of God's special favour to him; and he attributes his experiences of that favour to his own integrity of purpose, and faithfulness to the law of God: confessing that his heart stood in awe of the Word; that he rejoiced in it as one rejoiceth who findeth great wealth; that he loved the commandments of his God; and that for all the righteous judgments he had witnessed, he was instant in season and out of season, in the pleasing duty of praising the God of his salvation—seven times a day do I praise Thee. But it is no less a duty to hate that which is evil, than it is to love that which is good. He is but an imperfect Christian, who while he professes to admire virtue, can laugh at the grossness of vice, or pass over it when covered with the veil of refinement; or perhaps defend it, rather than in silence hear it rebuked, when the liar or the slanderer is a presumed superior in his worldly station. Such was not the double dealing of the man after God's own heart; such is not the example he sets before us—As for lies, I hate and abhor them.

Ver. 5—8. “Amidst the storms and tempests of the world,

there is a perfect calm in the breasts of those who not only do the will of God, but love to do it. They are at peace with God by the blood of reconciliation; at peace with themselves by the answer of a good conscience, and the subjection of those desires which war against the soul; at peace with all men by the spirit of charity: and the whole creation is so at peace with them, that all things work together for their good. No external troubles can rob them of this great peace; no offences or stumbling-blocks, thrown in their way by persecution or temptation, by the malice of enemies or the apostacy of friends, by any thing which they see, hear of, or feel, can detain or divert them from their course."* In this peaceful confidence does the Psalmist approach his God and Saviour, detailing his own practice as the evidence of his faith; almost boasting of his faith and obedience, as the ground of a sure and certain hope of his final acceptance among the spirits of the just made perfect. If we, my brethren, while walking in this valley of the shadow of death, would share the peace which is of God alone, and which passeth understanding, we must first learn to surrender ourselves unto Him, soul and body, heart and mind; in full faith that He careth for us; that He will not suffer our feet to slip, while leaning upon the testimonies of his love; that even under temptation, persecution, or affliction, we shall not greatly fall, if we strive against our natural frailties to keep his commandments and his testimonies in our heart; so that in all our prayers offered at the footstool of His Mercy-seat, we may be able to reflect upon the awful truth, and to confess, though with fear and trembling, that to Him all our hearts are open, that from Him no secrets are hid, and that all our ways are before Him.

PART XXII.—*Tau.*

Ver. 1, 2.—Though it may not, at first sight, be obvious to every reader, here is a very striking change in the language and

* Bp. Horne's Commentary.

the objects of these two short verses. In the first it is, Let my complaint come before Thee, O Lord: in the second, Let my supplication come before Thee. Complaint is not prayer; though it may be feared that suffering, or the dread of suffering, is more often a motive to prayer, than a prevailing consciousness that we can attain no good and perfect gift, but by the free grace of our Heavenly Father. The Psalmist has therefore preserved the distinction. He first prays unto God to listen unto his complaint, before he presumes to offer his supplication;—that the justice of his complaint may be weighed in the balance of the Sanctuary, and that his prayer may be accepted only as it may seem good in the sight of God. Touching the subject of his complaint, he implores that his understanding may be enlightened by the Divine Word, lest his own view of his suffering should be deceitful or partial; which is a mistake into which self-love may often betray us: and when the Psalmist prays that his supplication may be heard, it is that he may be delivered according to the Divine Word; that is, according to the promises of God, which the pious David had made the subject of his meditations, from before that youthful period of life, when the Lord chose him to be his servant, and took him away from the sheepfolds. Nothing is more certain, than that the seasons of childhood and youth are those in which the seeds of genuine piety take the deepest root, and produce in after-life the fairest fruits of virtue and usefulness. The busy scenes in which we necessarily engage during our progress through it, are often unfriendly to the growth of the religious principle, even where parental care has implanted it early; and always detrimental to the culture of the good seed unto perfection, when our minds and hearts are partly pre-occupied by the objects which minister to the gratification of the outward senses: and such objects, only, claim our regard in this world.

Ver. 3—5. Here is another peculiarity in the construction of this twenty-second portion of the Psalm, forming what is

called a parallel of verses that are separated. The three which I have now read are connected with the first verse, while the three which follow are dependent on the second verse. The desire expressed by the Psalmist in the first is, that the Lord would give him understanding; and the engagement or pledge that follows thereupon is, that his lips shall speak the praise, and his tongue shall sing the Word of the Lord, when he shall have learned the divine statutes; for that all the commandments of the Lord are righteous. Then he prays that the hand of God may help him, that is, impart to him the understanding which he aspires after in the first verse: for, says he, I have chosen thy commandments.

Ver. 6—8. Again, in these verses, the dependency upon the second verse is clear; for therein the Psalmist prays to be delivered according to the Word or promises of God; and in these are the expression of the natural desire and feeling of his strong faith, for the saving health of the Lord, that his soul may live to praise Him; and the confession that thus God's judgments shall help him, notwithstanding that he had gone astray, like a sheep that is lost. By all and each of us, my brethren, this confession should be made a part of our daily and hourly communion with our Heavenly Father, through his Son Jesus Christ, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. And if offered from true and contrite hearts, his preventing grace is ever ready, by the operation of His Holy Spirit, to help our infirmities; to recal us from our wanderings; to seek and to save that which was lost;—for then should we shew forth an acceptable testimony, that however we had departed from the Living God, through the misguiding influence of an evil heart of unbelief; we, like David, though we had gone astray, could yet offer up the prayer of faith in the redeeming mercy of our God—O seek thy servant: for I do not *forget* thy commandments.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE LIII.

PSALM 120.

This and the fourteen following Psalms bear a particular title in the original, of which several interpretations have been suggested, but none so satisfactory as to induce commentators to adopt it. In our oldest Bibles each of these Psalms is called a Song of Degrees; but the precise meaning of this phrase is now completely lost. There is little doubt that they are compositions of David's pen. Under this belief I venture an explanation of the general title, of which, as I am not borne out in the suggestion by any known expositor, I must sustain the reproach of any adverse opinion. This 120th Psalm is appropriate to the position of David, when he was betrayed to Saul by Doëg the Edomite; and the succeeding ones down to the 134th (which is plainly a Liturgical Psalm used in the service of the Temple) are descriptive of the various *advances* made by David towards the peaceable possession of the throne, from that trying period, until he was enabled publicly to celebrate his final triumph, in the extinction of Absalom's rebellion. The whole of these fifteen Psalms are, however, "instructive and pleasing compositions," as affirmed by Bishop Horne.

Ver. 1—6. This Psalm opens with an acknowledgment that in past times of affliction the Lord had heard and answered his prayers; and now that he is suffering, or in danger of suffering, from lying lips and deceitful tongues, he casts himself upon the continued protection of Him who is the Searcher of hearts. Calumny is certainly one of the most deadly weapons of human warfare; for it is chiefly used against those who have not provoked it, and by those who cry peace when there is no peace. But as the Psalmist elsewhere foretels, the mischief of the slanderer shall return upon his own head, and his wickedness shall fall on his own pate. And in this Psalm he speaks more plainly of what shall be the punishment of the false and injurious tongue: What shall be done unto thee? what shall be thy recompense? even mighty and sharp arrows, with hot burning coals. These comparisons frequently adorn the lan-

guage of the Psalmist, and here they betoken the outward contempt and reserve of all honest men, manifested towards the calumniator, and the inward reproaches of a conscience ill at ease with itself. Few persons altogether escape the evil influence of one or more such characters in the circle of their existence; but it was for a season the hard lot of the son of Jesse to be surrounded by malignants, the object of whose malice was nothing less than the taking his innocent life. His lamentation, therefore, does not overstep the modesty of nature—it is doubtless a true representation of his harassed feelings—Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech, and to have my habitation among the tents of Kedar! The phrases are purely poetical, for whatever places may be signified by these names, these bear, as do all scriptural names, each a strong meaning—the first, a condition of captivity; the other, a place of darkness or sorrow. And David had been fated to a prolonged sojourn among treacherous and secret foes—My soul hath long dwelt among them that are enemies unto peace: and though he laboured to maintain a friendly intercourse with them, as in the instance of the cowardly inhabitants of Keilah, (1 *Sam.* xxiii,) yet when he spake to them thereof, they made them ready to battle. This is not an unusual experience with the most true-hearted and humblest of God's people; it was the experience of our Divine Master Himself; and the disciple is not above his Master. But, brethren, let us endeavour to prove how good and joyful a thing it is to dwell together in unity.

PSALM 121.

Here we have represented another step or "degree" in advance towards the consummation of David's future greatness. This Psalm is descriptive of the progress of a wayfarer or a warrior, proceeding on his course through many surrounding perils; but strong in his faith that the Lord Jehovah will support him against all adversity, and ultimately guide him to his predestinated inheritance.

Ver. 1—8. After the first and second verses, in which the Psalmist makes his avowal and confession in his own person, there is an abrupt but beautiful change of the style, which cannot escape the notice of the careful reader. At this point the soul seems as it were to claim its right to be heard, and to give assurance to the faith which has just been professed by the lips. The spirit springs forward in aid of the pious mind, to confirm its strength and to aid its aspirations. The soul cannot repose in the depths of its silent observatory, until, by its encouragement of the awakening thoughts, it shall have made assurance doubly sure. The man exclaims, My help cometh even from the Lord, who hath made heaven and earth: the spirit responds, He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; and He that keepeth thee will not sleep. This however, is but an imaginative view of this beautiful composition: we are justified in looking much higher for the source of it. He that prayeth with the spirit and with the understanding also, shall find an echo to his prayers, (whether they be the enunciation of his lips, or the aspirations of the heart only,) which he shall be enabled to trace to the still small voice of the Divine Comforter. He it is who inspires the prayer of faith, and giveth assurance that our prayers are heard. Elihu, the faithful counsellor of Job, instructs us that there is a spirit in man; but that the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. None other than the Holy Spirit could have imparted to David the confidence, which enabled him in a time of severe trial, and, humanly speaking, of dark uncertainty, to record these positive convictions of deliverance by the Almighty arm. Behold, the Lord Himself, He that keepeth Israel, is thy keeper. He is thy defence, and ever, though unseen, at thy right hand, while surrounded by foes who are thirsting for thy life. Neither, though exposed to all the maladies incident to the changes of times and seasons, shalt thou suffer from their influence. The Lord shall preserve thee; not only from bodily suffering, but from spiritual harm: it is

He that shall keep thy soul: for from this time forth for ever more He shall guard thy footsteps, and preserve thee from all evil. All this had been of little value as a lesson for us to ponder, if its application was limited to that favoured servant of God, the pious son of Jesse: but the promises are of universal and perpetual force; and their foundation rests on the word of One who is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of a man that He should repent:—I will pray the Father, and He will send you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever: even the Spirit of Truth.

PSALM 122.

This Psalm has undoubtedly a reference to the establishment of the Ark in Zion, whether penned in the spirit of prophecy before the event, or on the celebration of that solemnity. It is a warm and copious outpouring of the spirit of love, animated by joy and peace in believing.

Ver. 1—9. The opening of this Psalm seems to have been dictated by some sudden emotion of piety, on the near prospect of Israel's restoration to the worship of God in Zion. For the prophet evidently speaks of the future, though three of the first five verses describe things as then existing. This, however, is a mere poetical license, often discoverable in the language of the Psalmist. The prospect is realized to his vision by the strength of his faith, and his imagination revels in the scene, as if it were substantially existing before his eyes. He views the Holy City in all the splendour of her appointments; such as she would not become in reality, until the days of the reign of Solomon, to whom was especially reserved the privilege of building the Temple. Yet he foresaw that before that time Jerusalem should become the seat of true justice, the dwelling-place of temporal peace, the throne of a righteous sovereignty, and the fount of long-enduring blessings to be dispensed by God's providential care among his favoured people Israel. But

the beauty of this Psalm arises chiefly from the prevalence throughout, of that affectionate spirit so often manifested in the history of David's eventful life, as well as in his writings. And when we reflect upon the many changes which marked the progress of that life, its exposure to all the contaminations of intercourse with violent and uncivilized men, and its long familiarity with

War's varied horrors, and the train of ills
That follow on Ambition's blood-stain'd path,
And fill the world with woe ;—

we can but marvel at the preservation, in the heart of the dauntless warrior, of so much of the meekness and gentleness of the shepherd boy. But the predominant piety of David's heart was the preservative of his other virtues: and here it shines out in its native lustre. The leading thought in this fine passage is the welfare of his beloved Jerusalem, and an exhortation to the people to pray for her peace, as the best security of all national prosperity; that prosperity he promises, moreover, to all them that love her. His own prayer on her behalf is an admirable display of genuine patriotism—Peace be within thy walls, and plenteousness within thy palaces! He wishes her prosperity from the best of motives, a brotherly affection towards all his future subjects: but his vow of personal devotedness to her welfare is founded upon his ruling principle of faithfulness to the God of his salvation:—Yea, because of the House of the Lord our God, I will seek to do thee good.

P S A L M 123.

The suggestion which has been already offered, respecting the general Title of these fifteen Psalms, is supported, as we proceed, by the varying features of each. It were vain to conjecture to what particular event in David's experience any one of them may refer; but all are referable alike to some one or other of the changes and chances to which he was exposed in his appointed pilgrimage towards his final destiny.

Ver. 1—4. This short Psalm could have been composed only under the stimulus of some fearful apprehension. The devout appeal to the God of Heaven, with which it opens; the beautiful comparison that immediately follows, and which has all the force of sound argument; the earnest and energetic prayer to which that comparison leads; and the prompting occasion, namely, the despite and scorn of some proud and threatening foe;—all indicate some critical stage in the experience of Israel and her anointed king. For though the Psalm opens with the personal prayer of David himself, it expands at once, through the fine simile that is introduced, into a general supplication. In many passages of the prophetic writings we see the spirit of the Gospel clearly anticipated; and in none more frequently than in the glowing effusions of the pen of David. Here, as an instance, we see implied the reciprocal obligations that exist between master and servant, as they are defined more at large by the Apostle to his Ephesian converts. (*Eph. vi.*) Every Christian acknowledges that he also has a Master in Heaven, whatever be his own rank, or dignity, or wealth, or power upon the earth. A mutual bond is thus established, which may not be violated with impunity. The debt of the servant to his master is manifold, consisting of a prompt and willing obedience, a heart-service, as distinguished by St. Paul from mere eye-service as men-pleasers; it includes a fidelity which binds the servant to his master's interest, in preference to all others; even of his own, if it interfere with the other. Again, this mutual bond imposes its conditions upon the master, which imply a fearful responsibility hereafter. The eyes of servants look upon the hands of their masters for a just recompense of their faithfulness, their honesty, and their diligence; they look for protection under such evils as are incident to their condition; they look for defence against the consequences of an unjust aspersion of their character; they look for pity in the time of their need; they look at all times

for benevolence, forbearance, and tenderness. Even so, saith the Psalmist, acknowledging God as Israel's Master in Heaven, even so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until He have mercy upon us. The subject of his present complaint appears to be the haughty arrogance of some with whom he would fain be at peace: and there is certainly no stronger impediment to peace, than the pride of the human heart, when it blinds the offender to those things which belong to his own peace; and inflicting undeserved sorrow, and pain, and fear, upon the more humble; until his eyes turn only unto the Lord his God for deliverance, and with a faithful reliance upon the future just recompense of reward.

PSALM 124.

In this Psalm is delineated a manifest alternation in the condition of the people, but still a step or degree towards the final emancipation of Israel from her thralldom. The prayer of the preceding Psalm appears to have been answered by some prompt manifestation of the Divine Power, which gives to the leader of the people renewed confidence. "A change comes o'er the spirit of his dream," and he indulges in rapturous acknowledgments of the timely interference of the Almighty Arm, in the past moment of danger and fear. The Psalm is remarkable chiefly for the simplicity of its language, though not devoid of poetical ornament: yet in these portions there is no obscurity that requires explanation or comment. I pass, therefore, to the next.

PSALM 125.

This short effusion has the appearance of a merely quiet reflection upon the sure mercies of God, as manifested in the events, whatever they were, that gave rise to the expression of gratitude which constitutes the preceding Psalm. An old writer of some authority interprets this Psalm, as instituting a comparison between the City of Jerusalem and the Church with her faithful members; and the leading portion of it certainly bears out this application.

Ver. 1—5. The omnipresence of God is here used as an argument of encouragement to the faithful professors of religion, whether of the Jewish or the Christian Church: for the dis-

tinguishing mark of the true members of either Church is, that they put their trust in the Lord: and to them is promised that security, which can be derived only from the ever-watchful guardianship of the Most High. The Psalmist likens their safety to that of Jerusalem, which is protected on every side by commanding hills; and, in pursuing his figurative language, compares *their* protective position with the universal presence of the Lord, wherever his people dwell; which is in perfect conformity with that promise of the Saviour, Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them. So standeth the Lord round about his people, from this time forth for evermore. And He will protect them from the tyranny of ungodly rulers, for their sceptre shall not come into the lot of the righteous. Such is the meaning of the word *rod*; as we read it in the prophecy of Isaiah, (c. xi,) There shall come a rod out of the stem of Jesse, that is, a Ruler bearing the sceptre of universal dominion. The concluding verse of the Psalm, after a brief interloutory prayer for those that are good and true of heart, foretels the fate of all such as persist in following their own wickedness; and predicts with all the confidence of a faithful heart, the fulfilment of the apostolic benediction—Peace and mercy upon the Israel of God. (*Gal.* vi, 16.)

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE LIV.

PSALM 126.

It was not at once, and all together, that the children of Israel were released from the bondage imposed upon them at different times by their triumphant heathen foes. This Psalm therefore opens with a thanksgiving for those, who had already experienced the blessing of restored liberty, and concludes with a prayer for such as yet remained in captivity.

Ver. 1—3. Unexpected deliverances from positive and present sufferings appeal to the natural feelings with irresistible force; though it is not always that we acknowledge the hand which alone could restore us to freedom and peace. Here, however, the Psalmist ascribes the deliverance of his people from every successive thralldom to the goodness of the Lord, by whom alone the captivity of Sion was turned away, by whom the bonds of slavery were broken, and Israel made free. And whether alluding to their repeated experience of such deliverance, or to any one particular occasion, he speaks of it as an event not calculated upon or foreseen; for that the effect upon their minds and feelings was such as prevails when one awaketh out of sleep: they were like unto them that dream: all their faculties had been subdued to the consciousness of only a hopeless destiny: all their sensations were those only of pain and despair. And when awakened to the conviction that once more the blessings of freedom were their's, Nature proclaims her jubilee—Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with joy. So obvious, too, was the instrumentality of the divine arm in their deliverance, that even their heathen oppressors were fain to glorify the God of the Israelites,

for the manifestation of his love towards his own chosen people: they were constrained to admit, that the Lord had done great things for them.

Ver. 4—7. The Psalmist here takes up the language previously ascribed to the wandering heathen, for the opening of his grateful acknowledgment, and for the foundation of his prayer for the complete deliverance of Israel. The figure of the rivers in the south applies to the torrents which usually rushed through certain parts of the deserts to the south of Judæa, when copious rains had followed a long drought: and the Psalmist probably had an eye to the multitude who availed themselves of the proclamation of Cyrus, permitting them to return to their native land; the number of whom, according to the prophet Ezra, was 42,360. These must have quitted the land of their long bondage with tears of joy, amid the terrors of the pilgrimage before them. But our Lord's promise was applicable to their condition:—Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. “The fatigue of travelling from Babylon to Judæa, the melancholy prospect of a long depopulated country, and ruined city; the toil necessary to be undergone, before the former could again be brought into order, and the latter rebuilt; all these considerations could not but allay the joy of the released captives. They are therefore comforted with the promise, that God would give a blessing to their labours, and finally crown them with success; so that they should once more see Jerusalem in prosperity, and behold in Zion the beauty of holiness. Here, too, the faithful disciple of Jesus may see an emblem of his present labour and of his future reward. He may now sow in tears, he may here go on his way weeping; but if he bear forth the good seed of righteousness, the day is coming when he shall reap in joy, and plentiful shall be his harvest.”*

• Bp. Horne.

P S A L M 127.

Though this Psalm contains nothing but very obvious truths, yet they are too little regarded as subjects for reflection, and as stimulants to the exercise of faith. It is one of the Psalms, though seldom used, which forms a part of our service of Thanksgiving after Child-birth. It has been conjectured that it was written to celebrate the re-building of the city and temple, after the return from Babylon, either by David for Solomon, or by Solomon himself.

Ver. 1—6. This brief composition presents an imaginative sketch, in which are blended together the distinguishing features of social security and domestic happiness; and at the same time seriously impressive of the great truth, that neither the power nor the wisdom, nor even the virtues of man, are sufficient to secure the one; nor that the dearest ties of the other are any thing less than the immediate heritage and gift that cometh from the Lord. The Psalm also furnishes a severe rebuke of the sinful pride of self-dependance. Human labour is thrown away and lost, human care and foresight are exercised in vain, human prudence is but a self-inflicted vexation of spirit, if the divine superintendence, and direction, and blessing, accompany not our thoughts and our labours. Many there be who rise up early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness, in entire dependance on their own wisdom for the attainment of perishable riches; and who have not God in all their thoughts. But how quietly does the sacred penman rebuke them: Surely, says he, (for the word *so* is a mistranslation,) *surely* God giveth his beloved sleep! Again—the Psalmist gives a caution to the poor man, that he despair not because of a numerous family dependant on his labour; for children are blessings, if brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord: and to the more wealthy he gives the encouragement, that children are the richest sources and pro-

moters of true happiness, the strength of their lives, the support and security of their honour; and if duly trained in the paths of virtue and piety, their surest defence against an enemy; as being by the bonds of nature their most eloquent advocates and their warmest protectors.

PSALM 128.

As the foregoing Psalm in its opening portion declares, negatively, how necessary the divine blessing is to the success of all human designs and pursuits; so does this set forth plainly, that to live in godly fear is our best security for the possession of that blessing: and it also presents a beautiful picture of its temporal rewards. It is supposed to have formed a part of the marriage service of the Israelites, as it does of our Church at this time.

Ver. 1—7. The echo of this opening declaration is heard throughout every page of the Sacred Volume. It was proclaimed by all the Prophets, it is repeated by the Evangelists, and our Redeemer Himself inculcated the lesson upon his hearers as the foundation of all true wisdom, the only security for our perfect happiness. The Psalmist confines his view to the blessings it secures to us while advancing on our earthly pilgrimage. And to these we cannot be indifferent, though we too frequently pursue the vain shadow of imaginary happiness, under the impulse of every passion which is hostile to the admission of godly fear within our hearts. Yet we are by nature conscious of the capability of happiness, even in this life: and too many seek it here, and here only: these, however, are judiciously blinded to follow a phantom which has no substantial being: while they who, endued with a godly fear and faith, are wisely pursuing the glory that *shall* be revealed hereafter, shall here want no manner of thing that is good; and are taught by happy experience

To believe that this world, though it be not the best,
Is the next to the best we shall ever attain.

PSALM 129.

Upon whatever occasion this Psalm was written, and which it is not safe to conjecture, it consists of three distinct parts: in the first, Israel commemorates and complains of the various calamities and persecutions she had sustained; in the next, she gratefully acknowledges the deliverances she had experienced to have been wrought by the Lord alone; and lastly, in the language of imprecation, she foretels the judgments of God upon her enemies.

Ver. 1—4. Whether we look to the life of David himself, to the experience of the Church of Israel, or to the contradiction and opposition of sinners to the establishment of Christ's kingdom upon earth, we see in these opening verses a true picture of the fate of each. The foes of each have in their turn fought against the anointed Son and servants of God. And as in the youthful days of the son of Jesse, so in the earliest periods of the Legal and Christian Dispensations, has their enmity been manifested. But, as the Psalmist exultingly proclaims, They have not prevailed! They have inflicted many deep wounds upon the faithful in all ages; and the consummation of their guilt was the crucifying the Lord of Life and Glory. By his resurrection, however, and by his triumphant re-ascension to the glory which He had before the world was, the snares of the ungodly were hewn in pieces; the treachery of Satan was exposed, his malignant designs against the whole human race were frustrated, and death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. But forasmuch as human nature cannot be completely purged of its corruption, there are and ever will be found, many adversaries of the Church, and of all her faithful sons. Of these, nevertheless, the ultimate fate is inevitably sealed; and in the imprecation which here follows, the Psalmist gives only a faint type of their final condition; when they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

Ver. 5—8. These verses, though altogether metaphorical, are easily understood, and as easily applied to such as have evil will at Sion; that is, toward the Church of the Living God. And the illustration with which the Psalm concludes, is said to refer to a custom of the Israelites, when any of them walking in the fields came upon a husbandman in the act of casting seed into the ground: with a fine feeling of consciousness that upon such labours the well-being of the community greatly depended, the wayfarer bestowed his passing benediction: The Lord prosper you! we wish you good luck in the Name of the Lord! The Psalmist predicts, that no such blessing shall greet the footsteps of the ungodly persecutor, or of the unprofitable servant, who may be likened to the grass growing upon the house-tops, which withereth afore it be plucked up.

PSALM 130.

This is the sixth of the Penitential Psalms, so called because the use of them was imposed upon excommunicate persons, as part of the discipline required of them as penitents, before they were re-admitted into communion. It is doubtful, however, whether it was composed by some pious captive in Babylon, or by David as a prayer for pardon in the matter of Uriah's wife. The language of it indicates the deepest humiliation of spirit: and many are the occasions in every man's life, when, in the retirement of his closet, he may appreciate the value of this prayerful composition, under the consciousness of some sad violation of the pure and perfect Law of the Lord.

Ver. 1—4. If this Psalm is an effusion of David's contrite heart, we may understand its opening words to refer to his past experience of persecution, when from his hiding-places he had lifted up his thoughts in prayer to God, and had been favourably regarded, and delivered; and that now he uses his experience as an argument for renewed trust in the divine mercy and forbearance. Because, O Lord, I have called upon Thee out of the deep of my past distresses, and Thou heardest me, O let thine ears consider well the cause of my present complaining!

I am involved in the misery of conscious guilt; my soul is overwhelmed in the torrent of her own iniquity: but there is mercy with Thee; or else how should a holy fear ever restrain thine erring creatures from going on still in the paths of wickedness? In that mercy, however, is my hope;* for that alone sheds a light upon the dark scenes of my past offences; from which I could otherwise anticipate only the blackness of darkness for ever. For if Thou, O Lord, wert extreme to mark what is done amiss, who could abide it?

Ver. 5, 6. There is great beauty in the earnestness of these expressions, which indicate an impatience of any delay in the duty of offering the earliest possible sacrifice of prayer, from the moment of the restoration of the senses from the transient death of sleep: and they are thus paraphrased by a learned divine:—"My soul hasteneth as the morning watchers, that is, as they hasten to their appointed duty; for they are not earlier than I am in my daily addresses to God. These watchers of the morning, according to the Chaldee paraphrase, were priests, or some officers appointed by them, whose duty it was to watch from a tower the first appearance of the break of day."† So the Psalmist expresses his eager anticipation of the coming of the Day Spring from on high:—I look for the Lord: my soul doth wait for Him.

* While this volume was in the press, a little Poem appeared, *The Vision of Peace*, by the Rev. John Edge, Rector of Waldringfield, Suffolk; by an extract from which, I may illustrate this passage:—

But, if perchance my feet should stray,
 Oh check me in my devious way!
 It may be, that correction mild
 May subjugate thy wilful child:
 If not, send trouble, sorrow, pain,
 Or *ought*, to drive me back again
 With sweet compulsion, to that road
 Which leads to thy desired abode!

† Dr. Hammond.

Ver. 7, 8. We have here intrinsic evidence that this is a Psalm of David, in the peculiarity which is so obvious in many others; namely, that the pious monarch, in his most earnest personal prayers, never forgets his people. Here, in few words, he exhorts, encourages, and assures them of the divine protection, by his own long experience:—O Israel, trust in the Lord: with Him is mercy; with Him is plenteous redemption; and He shall redeem Israel from all his sins.

PSALM 131.

As this in the original bears the title of a Psalm of David, it helps to strengthen the conjecture, that the preceding Psalm is also his, from the similarity of the concluding exhortation in each. The occasion of this humble appeal to the Searcher of hearts was, that David was continually suspected and charged, by Saul and his followers, of designs upon the government of Israel during Saul's life-time. They knew that the son of Jesse was the anointed future king; and judging him by their own godless principles, they were ever jealous and envious of him. This, however, is his humble appeal, not to men, but to God.

Ver. 1—4. This Psalm, if we exclusively appropriate it to David's case, will be valuable only as a brief portion of the history of his life and character. But as an example, and as a stimulus to self-examination, it is worthy the study of every Christian. It is impossible to peruse it thoughtfully, without feeling an appeal to the conscience; and that appeal will enforce a response, either of self-condemnation or of inward peace. Happy is he in whose breast there dwell no lurking desires after forbidden objects, whether of the spirit or of the flesh; and who feels and can say, that from all their influence and controul, my soul is even as a weaned child.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE LV.

PSALM 132.

This is one of the Psalms appointed by our Church to be used in the services for Christmas Day, and consists of two distinct divisions of its subject—an earnest prayer, founded upon David's vow to build a temple for the national worship of God; and the reply, and renewal of the eternal promise, that the long-expected Messiah should come of the house and lineage of David; and that the spiritual Sion, of which Christ is the Chief Corner-Stone, should be the habitation of the Most High for ever.

Ver. 1—10. There is no mention made in the Old Testament histories of the oath and the vow here alluded to by the Psalmist, although it was probably a private act of his devotional spirit: yet it is stated in the second Book of Samuel (c. vii) that David had communicated his desire to build a Temple to the Lord, unto the prophet Nathan; and that he highly approved of the intention; for Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the Lord is with thee. This honour, however, was reserved for Solomon, by the special appointment of God. But David here appeals to the Lord upon his known intention; which seems to have had its origin in the command he had once received, to build an altar unto the Lord in Beth-el, nigh unto Ephrath, in the threshing-floor of Ornan or Araunah the Jebusite, to stay the pestilence which had been occasioned by the foolish vanity of the king, in numbering the people of Israel; and which destroyed seventy thousand persons. This explains a verse which may have confused many readers—Lo, we heard of the same at Ephrata, and found it in the wood. It was in the region of Ephrata that Bethlehem, the birth-place of the Saviour, was situated; and it would seem that David looked upon that place with a prophetic eye, when, (as if

anxious for the time,) Messiah the Desire of Nations should come—Arise, O Lord, into thy resting-place: Thou and the ark of thy strength! For there is more of spirituality in this prayer than could apply to the priesthood of the Jewish worship:—Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let thy saints sing with joyfulness!

Ver. 11—19. In these verses the Lord Jehovah Himself is introduced as confirming the promise made aforetime, that of the fruit of David's body Messiah should come; and that therefore the family and lineage of David should not be cut off, until, according to the prophecy of the dying Jacob, Shiloh should come. For that the foes of Israel should be baffled in all their designs to destroy the succession of the descendants of David: because the Lord had chosen Sion to be an habitation for Himself, declaring that this should be his rest for ever, forasmuch as He hath a delight therein. Therefore does He promise unto her a perpetuity of temporal and spiritual blessings—I will bless her victuals with increase, and satisfy her poor with bread. I will deck her priests with health, and her saints shall rejoice and sing. But, my brethren, we are not to understand all this as exclusively designed for the visible Jerusalem; for it relates chiefly to the spiritual Sion, which, at the appointed time should be built up, for the refuge and healing of all nations. In the mean time it was promised that the horn of David should flourish; that Jerusalem should be the seat of that temporal power and majesty, which the Almighty had purposed to continue in his family, until all the families of the earth should be more largely blessed, in the perpetual dominion of the Lord Jesus; unto whose light the Gentiles should come, and kings to the brightness of his rising: when the glory of the Lord should be revealed in the Person of his Son, and all flesh should see the salvation of God. For the Lord Jehovah here renews the assurance of his promise of this blessing to the house of David—I have ordained a lantern (or a lamp, as

the Bible reading is) for mine anointed. This is to be understood as an assurance, that the honours vouchsafed to God's anointed servant in his own person, should be continued through the succeeding generations of his family, until the great purpose for which David had been raised up should be fulfilled; namely, until the Day Star from on high should appear, to realize the promise made to a thousand generations, that in the seed of Abraham all the families of the earth should be blessed. It is therefore promised by the Lord Jehovah that He will make the horn of David, that is, his strength, to flourish; and that his enemies should be clothed with shame, while upon the heads of himself and his successors should his crown flourish. Nearly the whole of these verses, however, may be understood as descriptive of Messiah's kingdom, the Monarchy of the Spiritual Sion; which the Lord had chosen to be an habitation for Himself, from before the foundation of the world, or ever the earth and the world were made. For as David was only an instrument, chosen in the eternal councils of Jehovah, to carry out the beneficent purposes of Divine Mercy towards the human race; so probably we must apply to him only the secondary meaning of the language used in this Psalm; lest we fall into the error which was so warmly rebuked by our Lord Himself, in that evil generation by whom He was surrounded:—The queen of the south shall rise up against the men of this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here! So also a greater than David speaks to us in this Psalm, in the person and by the mouth of his anointed servant.

PSALM 133.

It is probable that this Psalm was written and used upon some joyful occasion of restored unity among the tribes of Israel; but it is equally applicable as an incitement to all professing Christians to manifest towards each other the spirit of brotherly love; to take care that there be no division among themselves, on those

great points of faith and practice, upon the right understanding and diligent observance of which, depend so much the efficacy of the means of grace, and the reasonableness of their cherished hope of glory.

Ver. 1—4. The chief beauty of this Psalm lies in the comparison between that Christian concord which he recommends among the brethren of the same religious communion, and those emblems of the divine grace and favour, which were most frequently presented to his sight in the Sanctuary, and in the pure climate of Jerusalem—the holy oil, which by God's appointment (*Exod.* xxx) was used for the anointing of the priests, and signifying their inward qualifications for the sacred office—and the dew of the heavens, that mysterious blessing of nature, to which men universally attach the idea of fertility. But the Psalmist resorts to the use of these emblems, in the indulgence of that fine poetic spirit with which he was gifted: for he judiciously connects them with those eternal blessings, which the Lord Jehovah had promised to the spiritual Sion; and to which he likens the dew of Hermon, and that which fell on the country surrounding Jerusalem. It were impossible to find two of the productions of nature more suitable for the purpose of illustrating the peaceful and beneficial effects of religious concord. But it must needs be that offences come: and woe unto them by whom the seeds of strife are sown in the Lord's vineyard: though we know it was foreseen and foretold, by the Prince of Peace Himself—I come not to send peace among you, but a sword.

PSALM 134.

It would appear from the general tenour of this Psalm, that we may consider it as a sequel or continuation of the preceding one; wherein, having shewn the blessedness of preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; the inspired Penman, in the contemplation of that happy state of the Church, calls equally upon priest and people to meditate on the same; and to render the praise and thanksgiving due to the Giver of all good, for the manifestation of His Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of those faithful Israelites, who in his Sanctuary could meet and dwell together in unity and godly love.

Ver. 1—4. The Psalm opens as though some high authority in the Church were addressing the congregation with a reference to the beauty of holiness exemplified in the preceding Psalm; and as if he had said, Therefore, that is, for the blessed union of a people's hearts in the sacrifices of a pure and holy worship, praise the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord! Ye who are partakers in the ministrations of the sacred ordinances; ye who in applying to your souls the means of grace, lay up a good foundation for the time to come, when by the divine mercy you may realize the hope of glory: when things temporal shall give place to those that are eternal, and all the souls of the faithful shall see the salvation of God. Then, turning to the ministering servants of the Sanctuary, of whom there were always many together in the Jewish worship; he calls upon them to swell the general joy; to lift up their hands in the Sanctuary, and praise the Lord. The concluding verse of the Psalm can be read only as the response of the people, imploring the divine blessing on the Priesthood, as the intercessors with the Most High, for all spiritual gifts and graces. It forms an exact parallel to the latter of two verses introduced into our Morning and Evening Services; when the Minister prays, *The Lord be with you*, the people respond,—*And with thy spirit*.

PSALM 135.

Here we have a general exhortation to the praise of Jehovah, and an enumeration of circumstances, out of which grow the proper motives to praise; together with a comparison of the power and goodness of the One True God, with those false gods which were the objects of heathen worship; whether these were the offspring of imagination, the fruits of the perverted gifts of genius, bestowed on many of the greatest men of the earlier ages, whom we now recognize as our classical teachers; or whether they were carved or molten *images* of those creations of the human mind, set up for the purpose of enslaving the souls and bodies of the ignorant multitude to the will of their tyrant rulers. The Psalm concludes with a renewed exhortation to praise the God of Sion.

Ver. 1—3. In this Psalm, as in several others, the first call to thankfulness and praise is made upon the ministering servants of the Lord, as they on whom the duty devolves of leading the people to the acknowledgment and worship of Jehovah, and of setting them the example of a sincere heart-worship. The motives held out, both to the ministers and the people, are the character of the Divine Ruler of the universe, and the exalted pleasure to be derived from the grateful expressions of heart-felt devotedness to a Supreme Being, who is the Author and Bestower of every good gift, which is needful for the security and enjoyment of our present existence. But in the following verses, the Psalmist offers especial reasons why *his* people should sing praise unto the Name of the Lord.

Ver. 4—12. The selection of one people from among the nations of the earth, to be the instruments of his gracious purposes towards the whole human race, is a most astonishing part of the sacred history of the world's progress towards the light of Christianity. And its chief feature is, the long forbearance of the Almighty under the repeated provocations of the Israelites: their faithlessness in the midst of such plain manifestations as they experienced from time to time, of Divine Power, sometimes wrought in their behalf, sometimes for their especial and signal punishment: but the Psalmist gives the true reason, not only for God's persevering faithfulness to his own Covenant made with Abraham, in favour of his posterity; but also, why they should cherish the most devout gratitude towards their God, for the high position which they were thus permitted to occupy, over and among the other nations of the earth. Praise the Lord: sing praises unto his Name. For why? The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for his own possession. He hath done what pleased Him in heaven and in earth. That is, the divine purposes were established from everlasting in the counsels of the Most High, and were carried out upon the earth, in defiance of the opposition and unwor-

thiness of those, for whose especial benefit they were decreed. In these, however, the Israelites of old did but set the example to such of their descendants as lived in the days of the Saviour's Advent. When the promised Messiah, who had so long been the desire of the nations, came to fulfil the Covenant of the universal blessing to the families of the earth, in the seed of Abraham, did he find faith in the earth? No—He was despised and rejected. The world knew him not! His own received him not! The ministers and stewards of his mysteries can therefore only, from time to time, set forth the wonders He hath wrought, in delivering us from the dominion of our spiritual enemy: as the Psalmist displays, in the remaining verses of this division, the tokens and wonders manifested of old in favour of God's chosen people.

Ver. 13—18. But the subjects of the foregoing verses prompt the warm heart of David, here to renew his glorification of the beneficent Author of all these wondrous interpositions on behalf of his people; and as far as human agency can promote it, he insures the truth of his own declaration; by proclaiming to the end of time, that the Name of the Lord, as the shield and exceeding great reward of his faithful servants, endureth for ever; and the memorial of the Lord, from one generation to another: for that his faithfulness and truth, as experienced in times past, shall for ever be their shield and buckler: the Lord will avenge his people, and be gracious unto his servants. The four concluding verses of this passage are an exact repetition of some which occur in the 115th Psalm; and which you may remember, brethren, have already been brought under consideration.

Ver. 19—21. This call upon the house of Israel, and the house of Aaron, to praise the Lord for his mercies especially vouchsafed to them, would have little claim upon our attention, if we, my brethren, did not inherit a share in those mercies. But the truth is, that by the faithfulness of God to his promise

made to Abraham and his seed, we are in process of time become the inheritors of that better Covenant, of which the first was but the type or resemblance. It is in Christ Jesus that all the families of the earth are blessed; not only with the possession of present peace, but with the hope of eternal glory: and that hope founded, not merely upon our knowledge of what God had wrought for his chosen people, in the ages long past; but upon his repeated promises, given by the co-equal and co-eternal Sharer in his throne of glory, God manifest in the flesh; that, besides the promise of the life that now is, the certainty of eternal happiness is secured hereafter, for all such as call upon Him, and depend upon Him faithfully. Ye, therefore, who fear the Lord, praise the Lord.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE LVI.

PSALM 136.

It is probable, from the prevailing character of this Psalm throughout, that it was composed expressly for a portion of the daily service before the Ark; and that it was set to music; the chorus which ends each of the verses being sung by the whole Congregation: for in the 16th chapter of the first book of Chronicles, we have the history of the appointment of a daily service, and a similar hymn written by king David, and by him commanded to be used—he himself appointing Asaph and his brethren to minister before the Ark of the Lord; that they might give thanks unto the Lord, and call upon his Name, and make known his deeds among the people. See also *Ezra* iii, 11.

Ver. 1—3. Here we have the great attributes of the Deity set forth in a varied trinity of terms which comprehend all that we can imagine of boundless power and majesty—the Lord, the God of all gods, the Lord of all lords: while our proper motive to this worship of Jehovah is plainly implied in the repeated declarations that He is gracious; and that He is so, not in subjection to seasons of changeableness, or under the influence of any feeling like human caprice; but that in the exercise of his mercy He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever: and throughout this Psalm, we are called upon to confess and adore this great attribute of our Heavenly Father, whatever may be our personal experience of his dispensations. For we shall see as we go on, that his mercy is equally manifested in the overthrow and destruction of the wicked, as in his protection and blessing vouchsafed to the righteous.

Ver. 4—9. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. And these, my brethren, are the outward and visible signs which are given us of the existence, the power, and the goodness of the great Creator and Supporter of all things. For these are the mysterious

elements by which all nature is sustained and beautified ; and these are constantly appealing to our grateful admiration, and calling upon us to look through Nature up to Nature's God. One of the poets of Scotland has expressed this sentiment in a verse at once beautiful and comprehensive :—

Oh, how canst thou renounce the boundless store
 Of charms, which Nature to her votary yields !
 The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
 The pomp of groves, the garniture of fields :
 All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
 And all that echoes to the voice of even,
 All that the sheltering mountain's bosom shields,
 And all the dread magnificence of heaven !
 Oh ! how canst thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven ?

Ver. 10—16. It was natural, in a hymn especially dedicated to the Almighty, in praise of all his works of creation, providence, and grace, that the pious Psalmist should dwell at length upon the commemoration of those great and signal deliverances, which the Israelites had experienced before and after their redemption from the land of Egypt, and from the house of bondage, by the hand of Moses. The death in one night of all the first-born children of the Egyptians was not an event that can be supposed to have contributed to the freedom of the chosen seed ; but it was a manifestation of the divine wrath against their enemies, deserving of a grateful remembrance. The Psalmist therefore places it foremost among the events which marked the course of their providential deliverance : it is a part of the entire scheme of divine mercy on their behalf : for when He had brought out Israel from among them, that mercy was further displayed in dividing the Red Sea at the moment when their exasperated oppressors were at their heels ; and conducting them in safety through it, while Pharaoh and his host were overwhelmed in the closing waters. Great reason had the Israelites to give thanks unto the Lord, and to confess that His Mercy endureth for ever !

Ver. 17—27. I am afraid, my brethren, that we do not, generally, in our religious services of the Sabbath, enter so fully and so warmly into those subjects of thankfulness which should occupy our thoughts, as did these Israelites in their seasons of worship; though these seasons were much more frequent than our own. Yet if we take this Psalm as a specimen, and a portion of the Liturgy of the Jewish Church, and compare with it our own comprehensive forms of Divine Worship, we shall find that our Church is no whit behind in furnishing the means of grace, or the incitements to devotion. If it should suggest itself to your minds, that we have not the same reasons for thankfulness—that we have not, as a nation, experienced such deliverances from national peril as the Jews of old,—I can only reply, that this notion is the effect of a general ignorance of our national history. It is true that the people of this land have successively enjoyed, for a thousand years, the advantages of living under a single monarch; and that during the whole of that long period we have been regularly advancing in civilization, in knowledge, in the cultivation of the arts and sciences; in fitting ourselves for the awful necessities of a state of warfare with foreign enemies; and in improving the blessings of the alternate seasons of peace: but it is equally true, that before this period, Old England, as we rejoice to call our native country, was by turns a continual prey to the enmity and ambition of the surrounding nations, then living in the darkness of heathenism; and we may say, as truly as did the subjects of king David, that the God of all gods smote great kings, yea, and slew mighty kings for our deliverance; for his mercy endureth for ever. The greater cause for our thankfulness is yet, however, to be reflected upon. Our forefathers were also heathen; and it is believed and recorded in history, that this island is one of the many places which were consecrated to the reception of the Christian Religion by the personal preaching of the great Apostle Paul

himself. And we all know, or ought to know, for it is a truth as manifest to our sense as the light of the noon-day sun, that this small portion of the earth is now the chosen spot from which the light of the Gospel is diffused as generally as human means can accomplish it, to every people and nation under heaven. We have reason to hope that here is the resting place of God's ark, that this is the favoured land wherein God's honour dwelleth. Have we not, therefore, reason to give thanks unto the Lord; and to acknowledge from day to day, that his mercy endureth for ever? For as He giveth food to all flesh, so hath he given us bountifully of the bread that cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Let us not then, my brethren, forget to strive in our Christian calling, that we come not behind our Israelitish brethren in our zeal for the honour of God, or in our thankfulness for his mercies. Let the language of our lips, and the cherished feeling of our hearts, be those of the pious king of Israel—O give thanks unto the God of Heaven, for his mercy endureth for ever! O give thanks unto the Lord of lords, for his mercy endureth for ever!

PSALM 137.

There is much of true poetry scattered throughout the entire Book of Psalms; but the inspired Penman seems to have been a perfect master of this distinguishing gift, when reflecting upon the most painful events in the history of his people. The Babylonian captivity was to them a period of severest suffering, arising out of the cruel oppressions of their tyrant conqueror. This Psalm is a short but perfect poem—a plaintive elegy of the most touching character—for it is forcibly descriptive of the bitterest feelings of the captives, in their brief intervals of leisure and reflection, when they sat down, only as it were to weep; and when their insolent task-masters mocked them with the taunt that they should be cheerful in the midst of their sufferings—Sing us one of the songs of Sion! There is also a fine contrast to this pathetic portion of the Psalm, in the indignant style adopted to express the hope, that the day of vengeance of their God will yet be experienced by their tyrant foes. As this Psalm is but brief, and consists of only one unbroken subject, it cannot well be separated, like many others, in the recital of it.

Ver. 1—9. It is necessary for the clearer comprehension of the circumstances which prompted this beautiful elegy, to touch on the history and the causes of this terrible captivity. The history may be traced in the writings of the prophet Jeremiah. The causes were those which had brought upon the Israelites for many generations, all their sufferings, namely, their rebellions, their idolatry, and their licentiousness of living, in utter disregard of God's holy commandments. It was one portion of the economy of the divine anger towards them, to permit false prophets to arise among them; godless men, who should prophesy smooth things in the Name of the Lord, albeit the Lord had not spoken by them. The result of all was, however, that God gave them over into the hands of their enemies, to enslave them and to oppress them, through a period of seventy years. And it is this period which the Poet King commemorates in this beautiful composition. The condition of his people rises before him as in a vision. He sees their sufferings, he hears the insults to which they are exposed, he enters into their feelings, as though he had been one among them. But the poet and the prophet was gifted with peculiar powers. He could look upon the pleasant landscape which had smiled in the light of a glowing climate so long previous to his own existence, though it was now a spot overshadowed by the abomination of desolation: and where is Babylon now? He could see his countrymen scattered on the banks of the great river Euphrates, in the listlessness of despair. He could imagine the very language in which they expressed their sorrows, and could partake of their feelings, as they sat down and wept; remembering the land of their birth, their beloved Sion. He noticed even their unstrung harps hanging on the willows, silent and useless—those very instruments that were wont to give expression to their prayers, their praises, and their devotional exercises, in the Tabernacle at Jerusalem. He could hear the taunts of their oppressors, and their mental reply, half

indignant, half despondent, How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? He could mark the return of their revolt-ing affections, and their re-awakened faith—If I forget Thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; yea, if I prefer not Jerusalem (even) in my mirth! He could trace the natural turn of this feeling into its other channel, that of prayer and faith—prayer for the just requital of their wrongs from the hands of Jehovah; faith in his retri-butive justice upon the destroyers of his Temple, and the oppressors of his people—Remember the children of Edom, O Lord! how they said, Down with it, down with it, even to the ground! O daughter of Babylon, wasted with misery: yea, happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Blessed shall he be that taketh thy children, and throweth them against the stones! Horrible as this sentence may appear, the fact was denounced, long before, by the prophet Isaiah, in describing the complete overthrow which Babylon should sustain by the Medes and Persians under Cyrus:—Every one that is found shall be thrust through; and every one that is joined to them shall fall by the sword. Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes! *Mothers only can feel the force of this denunciation.*

PSALM 138.

This Psalm, while it expresses the sentiments of praise and thanksgiving for some deliverance from evil, experienced by the sacred writer, is also supposed to be prophetic of the call of the Gentiles to the knowledge of the Gospel: a dispensation for which the kings of the earth shall praise the Name of the Lord, and bear a willing testimony to His great glory.

Ver. 1—3. If we take the last of these verses as the leading passage of the argument contained in the three, we may remember, perhaps, some period or some incident in our own experience, when, under the pressure of some sorrow or afflic-

tion, *we* may have acknowledged the loving-kindness and truth of the Lord, in answer to our secret prayer. I could pity the man, if I knew him, who has not God in all his thoughts: for as we are all equally exposed to the changes and chances of this mortal life, *he* is certainly very ill prepared to bear them—contend with them he cannot—who relies wholly upon himself; who has no confidence but in his own strength; who does not acknowledge an appointing, a directing, a preserving Power in all things. Frail enough we all are: and if we read the history of David's life, we shall discover many of the weak points of our common nature, even in his character. Yet could he look with confidence to the mercy of his God in the time of need; he could acknowledge the blessings vouchsafed in answer to his prayer:—When I called upon Thee, Thou heardest me, and enduedst my soul with much strength. Therefore it was, that he could give thanks unto the Lord with his whole heart, not only in his secret chamber, but even before the eyes of the thankless and thoughtless world; and publicly among the mere ceremonious worshippers in God's holy Temple. Such may be the power of faith, even under the consciousness of our deep infirmity.

Ver. 4—6. This passage is considered as prophetic of the time when, as it was long promised, the glory of the Lord should be fully revealed in the Person of the Messiah: when, as Isaiah had foretold, the Gentiles should come to his light, and kings to the brightness of his rising. For the language of the Psalmist is very similar—All the kings of the earth shall praise Thee, O Lord: for [when] they have heard the words of thy mouth. And we know that Saint Paul, the most able and the most gifted of the Apostles, was especially called to the teaching of the Gentiles; and that these were far more docile than the Jews of his day, in accepting the glad tidings of salvation: proving the correctness of the Psalmist's comparative estimate of the Jewish and the Gentile world—Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly: as for

the proud, He beholdeth them afar off. The Jews of this day are as stiff-necked as of old, while the present Church of Christ is of the Gentile stock. Well therefore may the Rulers of the Christian nations of the earth sing in the ways of the Lord, that great is the glory of the Lord!

Ver. 7, 8. From his survey of the works of Providence and Grace, as displayed in the world around him, and as promised in the ages yet for to come, the Psalmist gratefully returns to his own individual experience, and to the confession of that strong faith, which is founded on his experience of the Lord's mercy, as manifested towards himself! If, my brethren, we were all equally capable of looking out upon the vast empire of the world, and upon the wondrous order and regularity by which all its concerns are governed, and all its commotions overruled for the common good of all, by some incomprehensible and Almighty Power; we never could be so faithless and unbelieving as to fear for our own personal safety; whatever temptations, whatever trials may assail us; whatever our experience of the ills that flesh is heir to; whatever we may suffer from the enmity of avowed foes, or of treacherous friends; or whatever degree of danger we may have incurred by our own wilful perverseness, and departure from the well-known written laws of our God. For his overruling attribute is Mercy; and our medium of approach to this inexhaustible fountain of life eternal is—PRAYER. Be ye then followers of the example of the pious king of Israel—walk in his faith—cherish his confidence—adopt his prayerful practice:—Though I walk in the midst of trouble, yet shalt Thou refresh me: Thou shalt stretch forth thy hand upon the furiousness of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me. The Lord shall make good his loving-kindness toward me: yea, thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever. Despise not then the work of thine own hands!—*Amen.*

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE LVII.

PSALM 139.

Some among the Hebrew writers on the Psalms have considered this as one which excels all others in the entire collection; but this were a hazardous affirmation of any single Psalm; for the beauties of these Sacred Poems are as various as they are numerous: so are the tastes of those who study them. The preference given to any one of the Psalms by some readers may not, therefore, be conceded by others. Though there is a perfect unity in the argument of this Psalm, there is much variety in its material; and many subjects for deep meditation, while the whole is entirely devoid of mystery.

Ver. 1—5. The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. (*Isaiah* xxxii, 17.) Conscience is the kind but rigid monitor, that passively or actively wields the rod of wholesome correction in the school-room of our wild and wayward thoughts, whether before or after they have ripened into action. If these are quietly, submissively, and with a child-like docility, engaged in acquiring the lessons of self-knowledge, and the yet higher wisdom of remembering, that is, thinking upon the Creator in the days of youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when we shall say, I have no pleasure in them; (*Eccles.* xii, 1;)—then will the approving smile of conscience cheer us onward in the pursuit of holier attainments, a more perfect knowledge of the Lord, a more zealous activity in his service: then shall we acquire the blessing of a more habitual communion with his Holy Spirit, whose gracious office it is to guide us into all truth: then may we go on our way rejoicing in the strength imparted to us from above; undisturbed by the changes and chances of this mortal life, and indulging that anticipation of unfading joys, which makes

Our bosom's lord sit lightly on his throne.

The blessedness of this experience carries with it the contradiction and the refutation of our great poet's well-known dogma, that

Conscience doth make cowards of us all:

No—a conscience void of offence toward God and man is an inexhaustible source of peace in believing; that is, in the exercise of a well-established faith; to which the great Apostle gives the evidence of his own severely tried conviction:—Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world. (2 *Cor.* i, 12.) Now, it is this consciousness of integrity which enables the Psalmist to lay open his heart before the God of the spirits of all flesh; not endeavouring to veil its natural infirmities, nor its acted offences, nor its unhallowed desires; but in the spirit of true penitence casting all his care upon Him from whom no secrets are hid:—Lord, Thou hast searched me out and known me; Thou hast marked all my ways; Thou knowest my inmost thoughts, long before they are uttered or acted upon; and Thou knowest how frail is my inherited nature! If, brethren, we could more habitually meditate upon truths so plain and obvious as these, we should unquestionably attain to a higher degree of wisdom than we possess, by acquiring at one and the same time a more perfect knowledge of God and of ourselves. This lesson is impressed upon our minds by the Psalmist's example, if we make his wisdom our study; for he now proceeds to argue upon the unreasonableness of acting as if independent of control or of responsibility, or as though we could escape the eye of an omniscient Creator and Ruler:—

Ver. 6—11. We can never sin with security, nor with impunity, but in a place where the eye of God cannot behold us. And where is that place? Have we a thought of escaping his inspection, whither shall we go? Heaven is the seat of his glory: creation is the scene of his providence; the grave itself

is the ante-chamber to the theatre of his power: so that our efforts to elude his universal presence will be equally vain, whether we ascend or descend, or whether we traverse the utmost boundaries of the firmament with the velocity of the morning light. The Almighty arm is ever present and powerful to arrest our flight: for though darkness may indeed conceal us and our deeds from the sight of men, yet the divine Presence, more penetrating than the light of the sun, turns night into day, and makes all things manifest. The same considerations which should restrain us from sin, should also encourage us to work righteousness, and comfort us under all our sorrows; namely, the thoughts, the assurances, the convictions, that we are never out of the sight and protection of our Maker. He sees and will reward all we do and all we suffer as Christians. He, who for our sakes permitted his Son to descend from heaven to the lowest parts of the earth, and thence again triumphantly to ascend to heaven, will watch over, preserve, and re-assemble the atoms of our dissolved bodies, whether mouldered in the grave, or buried in the ocean, or dispersed by every wind under heaven. So that in allusion to this event also, the dying Christian may exclaim, Whither can I go from thy Spirit, or whither can I flee or be driven from thy Presence? If, as to my spiritual part, I ascend into heaven, Thou art there to receive me: if, as touching my body, I make my bed in the grave, behold, Thou art there to secure me. If I take the wings of the wind, or the yet more expeditious ones of the trenchant morning light, and am carried by them to remain in the midst of the sea; still shall I be under thy power and providence: even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me fast, preserving me for the appointed time of resurrection, and to a judgment for the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or evil.—*Bp. Horne.*

Ver. 12—16. These verses contain, apparently, nothing beyond a minute review of the marvellous compound of the

human frame; but they imply the deep, silent adoration of the Creator, as the natural effects of the Psalmist's meditation thereon. For we are indeed fearfully and wonderfully made: fearfully, as regards the minute and delicate construction of the boundless variety of atoms which constitute the entire form; not one of which can be injured or deranged, without inflicting a pang of which the whole body is sensible; and not a few, of which the influence is so great, that the derangement of any one of them endangers the stoppage of the entire machinery, and consequently the life which by its movements is sustained. We are wonderfully made, inasmuch as that with the endowment of reason, and numerous faculties subordinate to, and co-operative with our reason, we must for ever remain imperfectly acquainted with our own nature:—Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent: we cannot attain unto it. This partial ignorance of ourselves is therefore a motive to humility; but while the knowledge we would acquire is withheld from us, there is a deeper, and more beneficial, and endurable wisdom, vouchsafed to us, and placed within our reach; and which the sacred penman commends to our affections by his own pious fervour:—

Ver. 17, 18. David's experience of God's providential care, and of his counsels, that is, the spiritual guidance which accompanied the son of Jesse in his troubles until his attainment of the covenanted dominion in Israel, were dear or precious subjects of contemplation; as innumerable by his memory as the sands on the sea-shore, though ever present to his thoughts, and forming the subjects of his grateful recollection, from each moment of his awakening into life and consciousness. Few have experienced such signal proofs of special Providence as David, but each of us incurs a debt of gratitude in every passing day of our lives; and it were well for us to follow his example in consecrating the first moments of our daily restored consciousness to the Giver of all our good.

Ver. 19—22. It would appear from the terms of this portion of the Psalm, that it was written when David was suffering under calumny and persecution ; for the abrupt transition from the language of filial confidence and fervent adoration, to that of execration towards his envious and ungodly foes, presents a striking contrast, indicative of some present and pressing trial of his spirit. For, without dwelling on the parenthetical outbreak of these four verses, we need only look to the humble and honest appeal to the Searcher of Hearts, with which the Psalmist concludes this impressive and instructive record of his faith and feelings. There is the docile simplicity of the child ; there is the confidence of the Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile ; there is the craving piety of the man after God's own heart, imploring, under the consciousness of his necessitous frailty, the continued light of the Divine Spirit, the perpetual support of the divine arm. [Read 23, 24.]

PSALM 140.

As this, like several others of the Book of Psalms, has been supposed to refer to David's sufferings from the malice of Doëg and the Ziphites, and which has elsewhere been commented upon, it is not only unnecessary, but would be superfluous to illustrate it, by again referring to the history of that affair. We will therefore treat the Psalm as the record of a prayerful spirit in time of trouble.

Ver. 1—5. Whatever degree of strength there is in the Christian's faith, that the God of all mercies will finally bring his soul out of trouble ; present trials from the malice and injustice of enemies, who follow their evil will regardless of all moral restraint, must unavoidably try the weakness of human nature to the very limit of its power of bearing and of forbearing. Yet it were better at all times to refrain from the attempt, and even the desire, to be our own avengers. This inward strength, however, can be sustained only by conscious integrity, by a spirit void of meditated offence towards God and towards

man, by a pure heart and faith unfeigned. These supports enable the believer to set at nought the evil designs and practices of those, who deny or doubt the existence of an all-seeing, all-judging, and all-avenging Power; whose throne is the seat of pure and perfect justice; whose eye is cognizant of all their actions; and whose revealed will is declaratory of his *partial* love towards them only who worship Him, serve Him, and obey Him, with such sincerity which is due from all rational creatures to their Creator. Again and again have I declared or implied, that the chief value of these simple and humble, but doubtless inspired effusions of a pious heart, the Book of Psalms, consists in their presenting to us a living, acting example of practical religion. And the graces of faith and piety are never more needed by us than in those, the severest trials of the spirit in our earthly experience, which are inflicted by the enmity of ungodly men upon conscious unoffending innocence. Yet in the example of David we find the true point of safety, the refuge whereunto we may always resort, in full assurance of faith. And in this Psalm, if meditated upon with becoming earnestness, we may find an antidote to fear, to despair, and to a presumptuous confidence in our own power to avenge the injuries we sustain from the violence or unmerited slander of others. That antidote is the prayer of faith—Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man, and preserve me from the wicked man!

Ver. 6—13. In the opening of this passage, the memory of the Psalmist seems to revert to some recent occasion when he had prostrated himself in prayer, and had then poured out his heart in thanksgiving for previous deliverances. And he proceeds in a very natural strain of earnest supplication against the success of the evil imaginations, and desires of those that compass him about. Nor is it less natural that he should, while reflecting upon their unprovoked hostility, and his own sufferings from it, advance to a tone of language which progresses from a more moderate to severer imprecation, how-

ever unwarranted this is by the laws of Christian morality. I say merely, that it is not unnatural, that he should first pray for the recoil of the mischief of his enemies' lips upon their own heads; or that, pondering on the effects of that mischief upon his own peace, and perhaps his very safety, the warmth of his wounded and irritated feelings should urge him on to the extremity of verbal violence:—Let hot burning coals fall upon them: let them be cast into the fire, and into the pit, that they rise not again! Yet we see how quietly this steam of the temper (so to speak) evaporates, upon a moment's reflection on the infallibility of Divine Justice; and it is remarkable that the language of the Psalmist here advances from a lower to a higher tone of confidence, as it did in the expression of his anger: the one being the dictate of nature; the other prompted by grace:—A man full of words shall not prosper upon the earth: for sure I am that the Lord will avenge the poor; that is, the oppressed: for this the righteous shall give thanks unto thy Name; and, rising above every affliction and trial, the just shall continue in thy sight!

PSALM 141.

The general character of this Psalm is so like that of the preceding one, that it would not require a separate exposition, but for one or two passages, whose meaning in our Prayer Book Version is not very obvious to the general reader.

Ver. 1—3. The terms of this passage are figurative, and possess considerable beauty, while they are very expressive of the objects of the Psalmist's pious desires. The comparison of prayer with the grateful exhalation of warm incense is at once natural and poetic, and indicative of immediate inspiration: for this aid is promised to *our* fervent desires after holiness, as none of the divine promises are exclusively applicable to those individuals only, to whom they were given: and this was the Redeemer's assurance to his disciples—Take no thought what

ye shall speak : for it shall be given you, &c. It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. (*Matt. x, 19.*)

Ver. 4—7. It is this portion that contains the only difficulty, and this is at once removed by referring to the Bible Version of the three last of these verses:—Let the righteous smite me—it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me—it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities: when their judges are overthrown in stony places, they (themselves) shall hear my words, for they are sweet.

Ver. 8—11. David had been marvellously delivered from many perils of death; and he here figuratively describes the false dreams of his murderous foes, that they should see his bones scattered at the grave's mouth. But he could laugh them to scorn: his trust was, that the God of Israel would yet preserve him from the snare which they had laid for him, from the traps of the wicked doers; and that not only should the ungodly fall into their own nets, but that under the divine protection he should ever escape them.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE LVIII.

PSALM 142.

It has been deemed an error in some Commentators, that they have given to many of the Psalms a meaning too exclusively prophetic of the Saviour's experience and conduct in his earthly ministry. But for the application of this short Psalm to our Lord's condition, both before and after his crucifixion, we have good ancient authority, even the testimony of a writer 200 years ago,* who states it to have been so applied by other Commentators, long before his time, as well as by many writers in the same age. I proceed then to give it what is called a Messianic interpretation; that is, a meaning prophetic of what would be the feeling, the action, the experience of the man Christ Jesus, during his pilgrimage on the earth; and also in that awful and mysterious state, during which his body lay in the sepulchre; when, as St. Peter relates, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, He went and preached unto the spirits in prison. (1 *Peter*, iii, 19.)

Ver. 1—5. In making the application of this Psalm to the Messiah, which seems to be perfectly justifiable, we must take the first part as reflective upon the treatment He had experienced from the Jews, after they had gotten him into their power through his betrayal by Judas. Yet we must not altogether lose sight of the parallel between the life of David, and that of Jesus the Son of David according to the flesh. The Israelites in the days of Saul and David were in possession of ample proofs, that the latter had been especially appointed of God, and anointed by his prophet, to be king of Israel. And though he did not at any time attempt to forestal the honour and authority which were designed for him at a future period; yet the jealousy of Saul urged him to attempt the destruction of his known successor in the throne. Thus it was with the chief Priests and Scribes in our Saviour's time: they stirred up the secret malignity of the Jews into the most violent hostility

* Amyraldus.

towards the Lord of Life and Glory, even though He declared that his especial mission was unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. David had proved by many marvellous and miraculous actions, and by many deliverances equally wonderful, that he was commissioned by a supreme authority, and supported by an Almighty arm. Yet did the emissaries of Saul, equally blinded to the just claims and to the virtues of the Son of Jesse, meditate his destruction. David, however, had a prophetic knowledge of the long-promised Messiah; and doubtless foresaw, that when He should come unto his own, his own would receive Him not. He nevertheless paid unto Christ the reverence that should be due unto his Name, as the Son of God; and probably enjoyed a clear vision of that far-off day, when the Holy One of Israel should Himself put to silence the envious Pharisees, by quoting the Psalmist's own words in rebuke of their blindness, as it is recorded by St. Matthew: for while they were gathered together, Jesus asked Him, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is He? They say unto Him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord saith unto my Lord, sit Thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer Him a word. This argument then, may be used by us, my brethren, as introductory to the application of the language of this Psalm to the Messiah's personal circumstances on earth, and the pious aspirations of his soul, in his hours of suffering and prayer. The innumerable evidences of the divine character and power of our Redeemer, must have proved satisfactory to any but a fatally hardened people, that He was what He uniformly claimed and declared Himself to be, the Anointed of God—the Sent to be a Light to lighten the moral darkness which overshadowed the gentile world, and to be the Glory of his own chosen people Israel; the Messiah who had been so long

promised, so devoutly longed for by the faithful of past generations,—the Desire of all nations! Yet in the fulfilment of the old prophecy, He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: they did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted by HIM: for He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. We know, however, that the crucified One forbore not to complain in his agonies; My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? and must admit therefore that the language of the Psalmist is, as the poetic record of a vision, appropriate to the condition of the Redeemer, on many occasions previous to his final suffering; the consummation of his mission of love and mercy. The leading verses of the Psalm plainly indicate, in the past tense, what had been the trials and provocations of the meek and lowly Jesus, during the progress of his earthly ministry, down to the hour of his mock trial before the judgment-seat of that first minister of “expediency,” Pontius Pilate; who, though he found no fault in his innocent victim, gave him over to the clamour of his murderers: salving his own uneasy conscience by washing his hands, forsooth, and proclaiming *his* innocence of the blood of this just Person! This scene is vividly presented to our imagination by the words of the Psalmist:—I looked also upon my right hand, and saw there was no man that would know Me. I had no place to flee unto, and no man cared for my soul! His own disciples had forsaken Him, and fled!

Ver. 6—9. In applying these verses to our Saviour’s condition, during the three days that his body lay in the grave, and his spirit in that mysterious state of being, which it is a part of the Christian verity to admit; we must bear in mind it was not until after his resurrection that our Lord completely put off our mortal nature: and consequently, that in order to complete the plan of our redemption, He passed through all the stages of our being, until the time when we shall be summoned to stand

before the judgment-seat of Christ. In this doctrine we profess our belief in these words—He descended into hell. It is a pity this harsh interpretation was given in the Apostle's Creed, to the original word, which signifies only the place of separate spirits; that is, of our spirits after they shall have been separated from the body: for it can never be imagined that our Saviour descended into the place of torment. And the statement of St. Peter, which is quoted in the argument to this Psalm, is conclusive, not only that there is such an intermediate state; but that Christ Himself, having taken upon Him our entire nature, partook of its extreme destiny; until by so doing, He should complete the conditions of the Covenant of Mercy; the plan of which had been wrought in the council of the ever-blessed Trinity from before the foundation of the world. By this view of the Psalm we are enabled the better to comprehend the mysterious words of the Apostle, that after his crucifixion, and until the hour of his resurrection, Christ went and preached unto the spirits in prison. For, as a distinguished living minister of our Church argues,* We know but little of the condition of separate spirits; but we know assuredly, from the witness of St. Paul, that they are present with the Lord. Why then may it not be considered, that the day of Christ's entrance into the separate state was a day of explanation to all the buried generations of the righteous, unfolding to them the mystery and obscurity in which the great plan of redemption was shrouded in their living day; and of shewing, how glory and honour and immortality were made accessible to the remotest of the world's families;—a day on which a multitude of indistinct types, which demanded the exercise of the most implicit faith, were explained by visible and palpable realities; and the hidden mysteries of prophecy made manifest by their fulfilment;—a day, therefore, in which the gladness of assurance imparted to the spirits of

* The Rev. Henry Melville—Discourse on *Heb.* viii, 2.

the just made perfect, a foretaste of the blessedness that awaited them through a boundless eternity; — a gladness which had never yet illumined the scenes of their tranquil but inexplicable repose. In this imperfect vision of a still shrouded mystery, we see the Saviour carrying on, to the last hour of his appointed time of humiliation, the work and labour of love, in which He wrought out the measure of his pilgrimage on earth, while and where He went about doing good. The declaration of the Apostle Peter, thus enlarged upon, plainly indicates the continuance of Christ's existence in our nature, until the moment of his resurrection. Here then we see the reasonableness of applying to Him the language of complaint as used in a future and prophetic sense by the Psalmist:—Consider my complaint, for I am brought very low. O deliver Me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for Me! The crucified Redeemer speaks as still suffering from the enmity of his earthly foes; for his descent into the place of spirits is but a prolongation of his trials, the consummation of his great sacrifice. And it is remarkable, that the place is spoken of in the same term by the Psalmist as by the Apostle—a prison, out of which the Holy Suppliant prays to be delivered:—Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks unto thy Name: which thing if Thou wilt grant Me, then shall the righteous resort unto my company. Nothing was wanting but his restoration to the life on earth, preparatory to his final re-exaltation to the right hand of the Majesty on High, in order to the establishment of his supreme dominion as King of kings and Lord of lords; when all nations of the earth should fall down and worship before Him; and when in heaven, among the assembled myriads of the celestial hierarchy, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, should alone be found worthy to open the sealed book of the Mystery of Divine Mercy, amid the harplings of ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; while their voices were attuned to

the harmony of the "new song,"—Thou art worthy to take the Book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests! Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing! Amen.

PSALM 143.

This is one of the seven Penitential Psalms, and was probably written in a time of deep dejection of spirit; but whether during the persecution of Saul, or the rebellion of Absalom, is a matter of conjecture, involving no important consequence. It is the effusion of a contrite but faithful spirit, acknowledging its own unworthiness, but relying on the manifestation of divine mercy, in answer to its earnest supplications.

Ver. 1, 2. The second of these verses is very appropriately adopted by our Church for the opening of its daily services: for it breathes the spirit of humiliation—that state in which alone we can hopefully approach the foot-stool of the Mercy-Seat, when we assemble and meet together, to render thanks for the great benefits we have received at the hands of our Heavenly Father, to set forth his most worthy praise, to hear his most holy Word, and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul. And the Psalmist offers the only plea with which *we* can stand before the Searcher of hearts. If we implore Him to hear our prayers, and consider our desires, we cannot come before Him with any plea of our own deserving to be heard; but, as the sacred penman says elsewhere, we must enter into the house of the Lord, reposing upon the multitude of his mercies, and worshipping in his fear; in the faith that He will hearken unto us for his own truth and righteousness sake. This is a practical acknowledgment of the Gospel doctrine, that by grace we are saved through faith; and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. This humiliation is the proper intro-

duction of our prayers unto God, whether in private or in the congregation of the people; and under whatever extremity of danger or fear we may have to deplore, we have the example of David in the cave of Engedi, and of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, that prayer is the best and safest refuge of the wounded spirit.

Ver. 3—6. It may be the last thing to enter our thoughts; but it is not the less true, that we owe many of our sufferings to the agency of our Satanic foe; not less in our bodily afflictions than in our spiritual wanderings; for as our great enemy was once permitted to possess the persons of his victims, and violently to distort their minds; so has he still the power to inflict bodily evils upon us, by evil instruments. To his influence over the minds of evil men we owe the prevalence of war and all its varied horrors; the frequency of murderous conflicts between individuals; the shedding of human blood in private quarrels, and by secret assassination; the less violent enmity which is long cherished in the minds of the godless and depraved, until their malice is gratified by some injury inflicted upon an unoffending brother; when, like the Psalmist, he might truly complain that the enemy had smitten his life down to the ground, wounding his spirit, and making his heart desolate within him. Against these terrors, there is none other remedy than the healing balm of a prayerful spirit, reposing in the faith that maketh not ashamed, even under the reproaches of the infidel and blasphemous. Such is the example offered to us in the practice of the pious king of Israel:—

Ver. 7—12. These two verses present us with parallel passages, such as Bishop Lowth has pointed out in the prophetic book of Isaiah; that is, the first portion of the 7th verse matches with the first portion of the 8th verse, and so also do the second portions of the two. After this plan, then, they will read thus—Hear me, O Lord, and that soon, for my spirit waxeth faint: O let me hear thy loving-kindness betimes in the morning, for in Thee is my trust. It is promised to the

righteous, that if they sow in tears, they shall reap in joy; and if the darkness of the night-season be hallowed by the incense of our prayers, we may rest in the hope of a speedy hearing at the Throne of Grace; and in our turn may awaken to some manifest tokens of the loving-kindness of the Lord betimes in the morning; and may renew our supplication that He hide not his face from us during the passing day, and that He shew us throughout, the way that we should walk in; that is, the straight and narrow way of righteousness, without fear of obstruction from the enemy, or danger of wilful wandering after our own vain imaginations. It is to the Lord alone we can look for deliverance from our enemies, spiritual and temporal; to Him we must flee, to be hidden from their malignant purposes: of Him we must seek the inclination and the power to do the thing that pleaseth Him: and on Him we may place our reliance, that his loving Spirit shall lead us forth into the land of righteousness, and quicken our souls; not for any merits of our own, (for this the Psalmist uniformly disclaims,) but for his Name's sake, and for his righteousness sake. The concluding verse of this Psalm requires the same change as that which was lately pointed out to you as necessary in the 109th Psalm.* It is not to be understood as an imprecation of vengeance, but as a prediction, by faith, of what will happen unto his enemies—Of thy goodness towards Me, Thou wilt, for thy truth's sake destroy mine enemies. Thou wilt not fail to be favourable unto thy servants, quickening them, even when dead in trespasses and sin, and bringing them in thine own good time, out of all their troubles; delivering them from their worst foes, their spiritual enemies; and enabling them to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil; that so they may triumph with their Redeemer, in the day when He shall likewise quicken their mortal bodies, and put all enemies under their feet.†

Glory be to the Father. &c.

* See note, page 8.

† Bp. Horne.

LECTURE LIX.

PSALM 144.

It is not doubted by any expositor that this is a Psalm of David; and it was composed, probably, in grateful commemoration of his first victories obtained over the Philistines, after his accession to the undivided empire of Judea. For herein he celebrates, in glowing language, the divine aid which had been vouchsafed to him in the struggle with his enemies; and predicts, moreover, that God will subdue the people to his peaceful rule; not only the eternal foes of Israel, but his own subjects also; that they may enjoy the blessedness of freedom under a just and righteous government. The Psalm is a fine specimen of the poetic powers of David, and contains nothing that is obscure, beyond the context of some of its parts.

Ver. 1, 2. Nothing can exceed in the beauty of its eloquence, the language of these opening verses. The triumphant King of Israel seems unable to express his grateful feeling and acknowledgment of the divine interposition on his behalf, in the past time of peril from his heathen foes. The harp of the minstrel revels in the sacred joyousness of its own gifted spirit; and the words of its master have descended even to us in all the grandeur of their imparted harmony. In all the Psalms of thanksgiving there is a rapid outpouring of the heart, which seems impatient of the bonds of language. It is true, I have gained a victory over mine enemies, I have scattered them as the chaff before the wind: but the Lord is my strength, and blessed be his Name: He teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: He is my hope, my fortress, my castle, my deliverer, my defender in whom I trust: for by his power alone are the people subdued under me; whether they be the heathen nations who are envious of Israel's glory; or the native sons

of violence and pride, who would rebel against the authority of his anointed servant. Blessed, therefore, be the Lord my strength!

Ver. 3—8. Here is the apparent obscurity of the context alluded to in the introduction: but I find it satisfactorily removed in the exposition of an old commentator on the Psalms. David falls into a meditative mood on the wondrous favour shewn by the Almighty to his creature, man; who is comparatively a thing of nought, and whose visible existence on the earth is transient as the passing shadow, or the dissolving vapour. And having confessed himself to have had singular experiences of the divine goodness in giving him victory in the day of battle, he yet remembers that the foes of Israel are not finally subdued; and therefore he implores the Almighty to descend again and again to his aid, in all his future contests with his enemies. The figurative language in which he frames his prayer, is such as frequently occurs in these sacred compositions; and is at once so sublime, as to fix the admiration of the most gifted reader, and yet so simple as to meet the understanding of the least learned: gradually subsiding into the plainest terms of supplication and description:—Send down thine hand from above; deliver me, and take me out of the great waters, from the hand of strangers to thy law, whose mouth talketh of vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of wickedness: by which terms is meant their vain boasting, their ostentation of evil threats and designs; which can avail them nothing against the faithful servant of the Living God.

Ver. 9—15. The sweet Psalmist of Israel here breaks forth in renewed strains of praise, on a subject which is always worthy of national gratitude: God is the Preserver of all men; but He manifests a special providence in his guardianship of the life and honour of the Ruler of a nation; because by the protection and preservation of kings, is advanced the glory of God and the good of mankind: and David had been the sub-

ject of many singular instances of the presence of the divine arm in his favour. The Psalmist now renews his prayer in the same words as those of the verse immediately preceding this passage, as if for the introduction of one of the most resplendent visions of his creative imagination:—As thy goodness is inexhaustible, I pray Thee, O Lord, since Thou hast put to flight our foreign foes, and hast established the commonwealth of Israel in peace, that Thou wilt impart to us those domestic and social blessings, which of old Thou didst promise to the favoured objects of thy care: bestow on the offspring of thy people the gifts and graces that constitute in thy creatures the perfectness of the image of their Creator, strength and comeliness, beauty and virtue; that our sons may flourish as healthy plants in a fertile soil, and that our daughters may be the ornament and pride of their country; firm in their goodness, and graceful in their forms, as the sculptured columns which beautify thy Holy Temple. Bless the labours of our husbandmen with an abundant increase of the earth's priceless treasures, till our garners overflow with plenteousness,

And groaning staddles bend beneath their load:—

that poverty and want may be excluded from our dwellings, and the voice of joy and thanksgiving exalted in thy praise. Make our sheep and our kine strong and fruitful as the flocks of Jacob in Padan-aram, where he increased exceedingly under thy blessing: (*Gen. xxx.*) that thy people Israel may bless Thee for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath; for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon; and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the everlasting hills; and for the precious things of the earth, and fulness thereof! (*Deut. xxx.*) For, Happy are the people that are in such a case; yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God!

PSALM 145.

This is called David's *Psalm of Praise*—the only one of the entire book which bears that title: and it was held in such esteem by the Hebrews, that they scrupled not to affirm of the person who should recite it three times a day, that he thereby secured salvation—a mere reverential conceit, by which they acknowledged the truth and excellency of the Psalm to be unquestionable, and beyond all praise.

Ver. 1—7. In almost all the Psalms which are particularly adapted to public worship, the writer speaks in his own person: and in this practice is displayed a judicious peculiarity, which imposes upon the reader the necessity of feeling, in a greater or less degree, his own personality in the act of devotion; which must induce a certain consciousness of responsibility and of the necessity of sincerity, unless he deny in his heart that the Lord is a God of knowledge. In this view therefore the Psalmist's vow is powerfully exemplary: I will magnify Thee, O God my King; and I will praise thy Name for ever and ever: even daily will I give thanks unto Thee! A resolve which is formed upon his contemplation of the incomprehensible dignity of Jehovah; whether we reflect upon his essential character as the Perfection of Glory, or upon his wondrous works, as displayed in the creation, preservation, and government of the universe. His attributes and his works are equally marvellous and worthy to be praised, having no limit which can be embraced by the human mind, but extending to boundlessness and infinity which baffle all the researches of our finite powers. And for this cause, the Psalmist foretels that the praise of the Most High shall be extended from one generation to another; and he proclaims *his* determination, the fulfilment of which is so strongly verified throughout the Book of Psalms, to perform his individual part in promoting the observance of this duty:—

As for me, I will be talking of thy worship, thy glory, thy praise, and wondrous works: so that they shall be the perpetual subjects of discourse among all men, to the praise and glory of thy great Name.

Ver. 8—13. Here are enumerated the subjects and the motives to that praise, which the Psalmist delights to inculcate and encourage by his own example. And before all else stand those attributes of God, to which we owe our redemption from the penalties of our inherited guilt and of our actual transgressions. It is made obvious to our senses, that all our daily wants are supplied by the bounty of our Heavenly Father; for that by the orderings of his Providence, the elements of the planet in which we live and move and have our being, are made fertile of those things which are needful to our nature; and thankless indeed are we, if we acknowledge not in these dispensations that the Lord is gracious and merciful. It must be confessed, however, that we are too habitually blind to our duty, and unconscious of our dependence; and consequently deficient in our feelings of gratitude, as well as in our acts of adoration. But it is to another bright characteristic of the Divine Nature that we owe the continuance of unmerited blessings: The Lord is long-suffering, and of great goodness. He is not only not extreme to mark our failings and deficiencies; but as He is infinite in all things, his forbearance exceeds our provocations; and this is manifest, not only in his temporal dealings with the children of frailty, but much more so in that ample provision, which He in his mercy hath made for the atonement of our offences against his pure and perfect laws; for under these our manifold transgressions, He is still long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance: wherefore, as we are exhorted by the Apostle Peter, we should account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; that is, the earnest of our salvation, if we avail ourselves of the appointed time, while

it is yet called to-day, to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. For the covenant of grace and mercy is universal: none are excluded from its benefits who will accept the proffered salvation; for as it is stated in the simple language of the Psalmist, The Lord is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works. Therefore, as it is here truly stated, all the works of the Lord praise Him; they set forth, in their silent but impressive manner, the glory of their Creator: while to man are given those higher faculties, which, as they swell his enjoyment even to rapture, in the contemplation of his Maker's benign attributes, so they increase his responsibility. And they who are conscious of this relative condition will ever be mindful of the gracious covenant, whereby that condition is established and made known: the redeemed of the Lord *will* shew forth his praise; his saints *will* give him thanks; shewing the glory of his kingdom, and talking of his power; that the power, the glory, and mightiness of his kingdom, might be known unto men: for that kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endureth throughout all ages. Here, brethren, it is obvious, that the Psalmist does not limit his contemplation to the temporal power and goodness of the Majesty on high; but that his thoughts soar onward to that spiritual dominion, which by the coming of Messiah is now established throughout the world, and will remain with increasing splendour to all eternity.

Ver. 14—20. Here the Psalmist enters upon more minute details of the goodness of the Lord, as manifested towards his creatures, under all the casualties of their mortal state. We ought, brethren, to be conscious, how liable we are to fall, in the blind pursuit of things which glitter in our eyes only to betray us; wearing the semblance of good, but in reality, whether we miss them or attain them, productive of vanity and vexation of spirit. Such are the unhallowed pleasures of the world; such is unreasonable ambition; such is the sordid desire after

superfluous riches; and, when they are gotten, the retributive curse of bondage to the soul-consuming tyranny of Mammon. From these deceptive influences, it is our wisdom and our duty to pray, Good Lord, deliver us! There is none other name under heaven whereby we can be saved from the power of Satan, wielding in his hands those deadly weapons of warfare against our souls: for the Lord alone upholdeth all such as fall inadvertently for a season under these fiery darts of the wicked one: the Lord alone can raise again to life such as are already down—dead in trespasses and sin. Here the sacred penman reminds us, for our encouragement under spiritual dangers, that the unslumbering Providence of God is the source of all our temporal blessings: and he uses this as an argument for our confidence in the loving-kindness that shall sustain and restore our souls: for that the Lord is righteous in *all* his ways, and holy in *all* his works; and is not a God afar off, turning a deaf ear to the prayer of such as call upon Him faithfully: but ever attent to their cry, helping them in the time of need, and fulfilling the desire of them that fear Him: and beyond all this, preserving them that love Him, not only from the dangers of their own natural frailty, but also from the evil influences of the ungodly around them, who shall be scattered abroad by his Almighty arm. From the contemplation of these recorded evidences of the abundant kindness, the righteousness, the mercifulness, the long-suffering, and great goodness of the Lord, the pious David returns to the expression of that devotedness which prompted the composition of this “Psalm of Praise.” [Read 21.]

PSALM 146.

The tenour of this Psalm so closely resembles that of the preceding one, that it cannot reasonably be ascribed to any other but David's pen, though some writers have conjectured differently, but upon no good foundation. It is the first of the

five concluding Psalms, all of which, beginning with the same words, have the common title of HALLELUJAH. The principal difference between this and the foregoing Psalm, is the introduction of a well sustained contrast between Omnipotence Himself, and the limited power which is only delegated by Him, for a season, to earthly potentates; who are but the instruments of his Will, and to a certain extent, the permitted agents of his Providence.

Ver. 1—3. The Psalmist appears to have entered upon the subject of this ode in a reflective mood, which led to a resolve founded in the truest wisdom. While other men, especially those who have the gifts of genius and the spirit of poesy, choose peradventure to devote their labours and their applauses to men of distinguished eminence in the world; I have decided to employ the portion of intellectual talent allotted to me, in the contemplation of a nobler theme. Therefore, O my soul, praise thou the Lord; for this, while I live, shall be my chosen occupation; yea, as long as I have my being, I will sing praises unto my God! For what is their dependance, who put their trust in the princes of this world? *They* are but the children of men; and though exalted above their brethren in temporal power and splendour, vain is their help, weak is their protection, under the innumerable ills that flesh is heir to. However faithful in their friendships, however prompt in their services, however sincere in their promises of unchanging fidelity, they like ourselves are but the offspring of the dust: into their nostrils, as in our's, the breath of life has been infused by that Power who can recall it at his good pleasure: and when the breath of even princes goeth forth, they shall return again unto their parent earth, and then all their thoughts perish: for there is one event unto all; upon which the prophet Isaiah hath expatiated with thrilling effect:—The grave hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure; and their glory, and their multitudes, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it: and the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of

the lofty shall be humbled. But the Lord of Hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness! To this awful consummation of equality among all earthly things, were the Psalmist's thoughts directed.

Ver. 4—10. The comparison or contrast with which the Psalm begins is here continued, and as the matter advances, it gradually assumes a descriptive character, fully applicable to the beneficent effects of the Christian dispensation. For God the Father had anointed his well-beloved Son to be the King of all the earth; and it is under his sway, that his faithful people experience those blessings which are here so minutely detailed; all which arise from our own faithfulness as his subjects, having fixed our hopes immoveably in Him: for then, having his help, blessed are we. For as all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth; as all things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made; so in Him is life, and that life is the light of men, shining in the darkness of this world, to conduct them on their pilgrimage; and illuminating those many mansions of peace and glory, whither He is gone before, to prepare for them a welcome admission to the heavenly Jerusalem, among an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. To win our souls to this belief, He condescends to support our weakness, to guide our wanderings, to heal our infirmities, to minister to our necessities here: for He hath promised—When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. And, He keepeth his promise for ever! He still helpeth them to right that suffer wrong; He feedeth the hungry; He looseth men out of prison; He giveth sight to the blind; He helpeth them that are fallen; protecting the strangers, defending the fatherless and the widow, and always caring for the righteous. This

is the Psalmist's exemplification of the certainty and beneficence of Messiah's government of the world. And he encourages the faithful believer to persevere in his faithfulness; for the Ruler of his everlasting destiny is the King Eternal—The Lord thy God, O Sion, shall be King for evermore, and throughout all generations!

Glory be to the Father, &c.

LECTURE LX.

PSALM 147.

This is a Psalm of general Thanksgiving, for the several subjects of which, we must consult its portions as we come to them. It is supposed to have been written to commemorate the return of the Israelites from the Babylonian captivity, under the reign of Cyrus; whose decrees and transactions concerning the re-building of the Temple, occupy a large portion of the Book of the Prophet Ezra.

Ver. 1—6. If we reflect upon the opening words of this passage with the seriousness which compels an appeal to our own common feelings and common practice, conscience may perhaps whisper the strong truth, that we more often experience a greater joy, a deeper gratification, in receiving and possessing the good things of this life, than in being thankful for them. It were well for us, however, to cherish the spirit of joy and thankfulness upon every occasion of thinking slightly, or meditating more deeply, on the blessings we have. Then might we by degrees come to know how pleasant a thing it is to be thankful to the Almighty Giver, for the good gifts which his exhaustless bounty is ever pouring into our lap: yea, we shall find that it is a good thing to sing praises unto our God. And as what we deem the smaller blessings which crown our days are the most numerous, the most frequently bestowed; it is for these we should evince our gratitude, in praising the Lord: for hereby we should establish a nursery, as it were, for our *feelings* of gratitude; and thus be enabled to pour out our hearts in a fuller tide of thanksgiving, as often as it may please God to shew us any signal instance of his favour, or to grant us any good thing that may be uppermost in our desires and prayers. This Psalm is a testimony of the sacred penman's redundant joy and thankfulness for a national blessing. The broken hearts and wounded spirits of the Israelites were healed and

made whole when they returned to their own land; when they beheld Jerusalem rising again in beauteous majesty, and sang the songs of Zion in the courts of the Temple. Thus Christ came to preach deliverance to the captives, and to bind up the broken-hearted, as predicted by Isaiah; (c. lxi, 1;) to speak pardon and peace to the wounded and contrite spirit, and to put a new song of thanksgiving into the mouth of the penitent; which he might sing when restored to the holy city, and the house of his Heavenly Father. The hour is coming when God shall heal the breaches which death has made in the bodies of his people; and translate them likewise from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Ver. 7—11. Here the Psalmist calls for the grateful praises of the people of his own time; they who were living in peace and security; who had not experienced the bondage under which their forefathers had groined; but were spared even to anticipate the blessings which should fall upon the dwellings of their children. He calls to mind the plenteousness with which they were visited under the revolutions of the seasons; and studies to impress upon their thoughts the awful but cheering truth, that for all these things they were dependent upon the God of Sion—Him who had once and again built up Jerusalem, and gathered together the outcasts of Israel, their own forefathers, from the pains and penalties of abject slavery. And the king of Israel encourages the meek among his people, by the assurance of his priestly authority, that the Lord's delight, his especial favour, is towards them that fear Him, and put their trust in his mercy.

Ver. 12—18. These verses are but a continued enumeration of the blessings experienced by the Lord's people; some of which have been noted in the preceding section of this Lecture. The Psalmist however, does not confine his thoughts to these things; but produces the contrast between the condition of God's heritage, and that of the people who know not God. In

the following and concluding verses of the Psalm, the spiritual privileges of the people of Israel are pointed out, and their consequent superiority over the heathen.

Ver. 19, 20. Herein also, brethren, consist the strong claims of Jehovah upon *our* undivided allegiance. He hath shewed to us his Word, He hath given us his statutes and ordinances. And forasmuch as his Word hath been enlarged, and purified, (if I may so speak,) by the clearer and more spiritual Covenant of Grace, dispensed and made known to us in the Person and Gospel of his ever-blessed Son, the contrast between our temporal state and that of the heathen world which still exists around us, is made more obvious, and presents a stronger appeal to our gratitude.* By the revelation of the Gospel Covenant, which was sealed and made eternally sure to us by the blood of the Cross, the crooked has been made straight and rough places plain: that is, the severities of the Mosaic and Levitical laws have been taken out of our way; the handwriting of those heavy ordinances has been nailed to the cross; all the repulsive bonds of the Jewish ritual and discipline, which might possibly have operated to deter the heathen from the reception, and even from the conception of the One True God,—all these have vanished as the shadows of heathenism itself, before the light of the Day Spring from on high, who visited the earth to give light to them that sat in darkness, and to guide *our* feet into the way of peace. This is the actual condition of the whole Christian world; the visible body of Christ still growing and increasing, until in God's good time it shall reach to the fulness of the measure of the stature of Christ, in *his* now glorified state. Whether looking backward to the experience of the faithful among the house of Jacob, in times

* Nec ad solos Hebræos hæc pertinet adhortatio, sed ad omnes omnino homines: estque adeo veluti prolium vocationis Gentilium. Deum enim laudare, ut par est, non possunt, qui Eum non bene nôrunt; nec Eum satis nôrunt, qui Evangelium nunquam audiverunt; e qua maximé Dei laudes efflorescunt.—(From *Bp. Horne.*)

long past; or looking forward with prophetic glance to the fulfilment of the promised time, when the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith:—to which ever point, I say, the Psalmist might be looking for the ground of his contrast, he speaks truly, that God hath not dealt so with any nation; that is, any other people than those whom He sees good to select as his most faithful children, under either Covenant. Here then, my brethren, is the foundation of the divine claim upon our unceasing gratitude; herein is a subject for eternal praise; here is the essential proof that it is a good thing to sing praises unto our God: for if our hearts be possessed with a living and abiding sense of our high privileges as the children of the kingdom, it will be felt beyond the power of utterance, how joyful and pleasant a thing it is to be thankful.

PSALMS 148, 149, 150.

No reason exists for charging our Translators with having departed from the division of the Psalms as it is preserved in the original Hebrew; but these three are so uniform in their character, so continuous in their pervading argument, and so incomplete in a state of separation, that I can venture upon a commentary on them, only as one outburst of almost superhuman joyfulness; as though the sacred writer, like the great Apostle, in the body or out of the body, had drawn his inspiration from the Fount of Life and Light Himself, and had learned his song of praise and glorification of the Lord God Omnipotent, on the very threshold of the New Jerusalem; and had caught the echo of that great voice of much people in heaven, saying, "Alleluja! Salvation, and Glory, and Honour, and Power unto the Lord!" (*Rev. xix, 1.*)

In the first of these Psalms, and at the very commencement, the sacred writer begins with the highest point in the scale of the created universe, when approaching to the climax of the glorious work in which he had been engaged—the composition of these DIVINE SONGS OF FAITH—for this is the true meaning

of the word PSALMS. It is unknown who was the author of the history contained in the second Book of *Samuel*; but it is in the 23rd chapter that DAVID obtains the distinguishing title of *The sweet Psalmist of Israel*. And it was the chief peculiarity of the Jewish worship in his days, that music, both vocal and instrumental, prevailed in all its ministrations. To this circumstance it might be in some measure owing, that he who was so highly gifted, felt himself impelled to dedicate his one great talent exclusively to the glory and honour of Jehovah, the Author and Giver of it. And how could he do this so effectually, as in devoting it to the worship of God in his Sanctuary? For here he could thus impart a measure of his own religious feelings to all his people; leading them to sanctify the Lord God in their hearts, by placing before them continually the claims which He had upon their grateful adoration; and enabling them to offer their sacrifices of prayer and praise in the most delightful and impressive forms of congregational worship. And though in these latter days, the cold and puritanical spirit which prevails, has well nigh shut out from our Sabbath worship the use of Psalmody, we may still be thankful that these inspiring effusions of David are preserved in our religious services; and more so, that they are within the reach of all who seek to promote their souls' health, in the exercises of private devotion and self-discipline.

To return, however, to our immediate subject. The character in which the Psalmist presents himself in this completion of his labour of love, is that of the conductor of a sacred band, composed of all the elements of harmony; uniting, in the concord of sweet sounds, to praise the Lord of Heaven. David commands as it were the powers of the universe, arranged in order before him by the magic of his own creative genius. He assigns to them their several parts in the grand concert about to be performed in celebration of Jehovah's praise. He calls upon those who occupy the loftiest seats in the universal choir,

to attune their golden harps and seraphic voices to the Songs of Zion—even the Angels, whose dwelling is in the height of Heaven;—well knowing, as it is so poetically expressed by Milton, that *there is*

No voice but well could join melodious part :
Such concord is in Heaven !

He instructs all the angelic hosts, whatever their rank or distinction in the Hierarchy of the New Jerusalem, to unite in thanksgiving to the Lord of Hosts. He calls upon the sun and moon, the stars, and all the infinity of God's creation, that give light to the heavens, and even upon the heavens themselves, to contribute their portion to the universal song of praise. And, as if to command and insure the willing exercise of their best powers, he reminds them that it was the Lord Jehovah who spake, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created: He hath made them fast for ever and ever: He hath given them a law which shall not be broken! The great master of the choir then turns himself to the inferior orders of the creation, requiring them to join their voices with the higher powers, and to swell the boundless chorus of praise throughout the deep sea, with all its living monsters—the elements and instruments of divine power for effecting good and evil towards the children of men, and for working out the providential government of the world—fire and hail, snow and vapours, wind and storm, each fitted to their respective parts in fulfilling, as the Psalmist says, the Word of their Creator; and each capable of swelling the harmony of his praise. Even the mountains and lesser hills of this lower planet are summoned to take their part in the great oratorio; while the fruitful trees and the taller cedars are whispering their softer notes of exultation. Neither is the harmony complete without the voice of the brute creation, all endued with the power of expressing their feelings, and possibly (like man) endued with feelings beyond their powers of expression. Nor are the kings and princes and judges of

the earth to be silent amid the universal rejoicing; for the great and the small, the high and the low among the offspring of Adam, young men and maidens, old men and children, are commanded to join in the celebration of their Maker's praise: because His Name only is excellent, and his praise above heaven and earth! For to his people and his saints, the children of Israel, even the people that serve Him, will He extend his protecting arm in their earthly pilgrimage, and exalt them in power above their enemies round about. And to this end, the inspired teacher promises that the praises of God in their mouth shall be as a two-edged sword in their hands, to be avenged of the heathen, and to rebuke them; to bind their kings in chains, and their nobles with links of iron: that they may be avenged of them as it is written, (namely, in *Deut. vii.*) Such honour have all his saints! Wherefore the Psalmist particularly enforces the heart-cheering practice of praise upon all who own the One True God—the congregation of saints throughout the world; inciting them to renew their joyful song from day to day; speaking of them all as the Israel of God's care, and as the children of Sion, who have so many and abundant reasons to be joyful in their King. Thus does the Psalmist arrange the order of that grand concert of divine harmony, in which all the created powers of heaven and earth are to unite, in magnifying the glory of their Creator's praise. And doubtless, with a reference to the practice of his own time and his own people,* upon every occasion of general rejoicing, he calls upon all the elements of the entire universe to praise the Name of their God *in the dance*; to sing praises unto Him with tabret and harp; that is, with the aid of such musical instruments as were most familiar to them; dedicating, as it were, those instruments to *his* service, which were probably, as in our day, more frequently employed in the promotion of mere momentary mirth, upon occasions which had no reference to, no affinity

* See 2 *Samuel* vi, 16.

with, the only true subjects of rational joy:—our confidence here in the God of our salvation: our hope that hereafter we may be partakers in that blissful state which shall experience no interruption, which shall know no end; and for the certainty of which we have the unfailing promise of Him in whom is no variableness, no shadow of turning or changing, and who is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever! For, as the Psalmist reminds us, the Lord hath pleasure in *his* people; those who look up to Him; those who rely upon his faithfulness, the faithfulness or truth of his revealed promises; those who in disregard, or contempt, or defiance of all worldly temptations or impediments, can look with the eye of faith over and beyond the things that are seen, which are perishable and temporal; and can realize those which are not seen to the fleshly sense, but are nevertheless the only things that have any real and certain existence—the things that are eternal. Moreover, the man after God's own heart assures us, after affirming that God hath pleasure in his people, as I have attempted shortly to describe them, that He also helpeth the meek-hearted. This is a class of persons who have not much of the world's regard: yet is the rare virtue of meekness highly extolled throughout the Scriptures, those written testimonies of God's regard for his creatures. For we read in the prophet *Zephaniah*, that even the Philistines, when called to repentance, were thus forewarned:—Before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you; before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you, seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment: seek meekness; it may be that ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger! But after all, the strongest incitement to our cultivation of this virtue should be our Lord's own example, and his promised reward to all who follow it—Come, learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

I will now read the three last of the Psalms, as the best mode of refreshing your memory on the remarks which I have submitted to your judgment, and with a desire for your edification. And may He, to whose praise they were written, give us the spirit of thankfulness for all his mercies and blessings; that we may practically know how joyful and pleasant a thing it is to be thankful! (Read Psalms 148, 149, 150.)

CONCLUDING ADDRESS.

Here, brethren, I cannot withhold the expression of my thankfulness, that hitherto the Lord hath helped me: that I have been strengthened and preserved to the completion of a work and labour of love, undertaken with all humility, but with a confidence in Him, and in the assistance of His Holy Spirit, which every day's experience has increased and perfected. The subjects of these Lectures are of the deepest interest to all men: and the sacred Penman, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, has clothed them in the most attractive language, to win our attention and attachment. "They are for this purpose adorned with the figures, and set off with the graces of poetry; and poetry itself is designed yet farther to be recommended by the charms of music, thus consecrated to the service of God; that so delight may prepare the way for improvement, and pleasure become the handmaid of Wisdom; while every turbulent passion is calmed by sacred melody, and the evil spirit is still dispossessed by the harp of the SON OF JESSE."—*Bp. Horne.* (See 1 *Sam.* xvi, 23.)

Glory be to the Father, &c.

NOTE A.

Perhaps no other Psalm has proved so tempting to metrical Paraphrasts as the Forty-second. Among those known to the author, the version of Mr. Merriek stands highest in his estimation. The following, by himself, written many years ago, is here preserved, that it might share the destiny which awaits this volume.

PSALM 42.

As when the hart, by hunters press'd,
 (Despair sole tenant of his breast,)
 Longs in the cool crystalline wave
 His palpitating sides to lave;
 But turns his languid eyes in vain
 Across the parch'd unsheltering plain;—
 So whilst around my shrinking soul
 The gathering storms of trouble roll,
 To Thee, my God, I raise my cries,
 To Thee uplift my streaming eyes;
 Yet still unanswer'd urge my pray'r,
 Nor find a refuge from despair!
 When shall again my longing feet
 Within thy courts thy Presence greet?

Throughout the lonely hours of night,
 Beneath the day's less welcome light,
 (Alike to me unblest with good,)
 My tears have been my bitter food:
 Whilst taunting foes around me press,
 To swell the tide of my distress;
 And still, as falls the chast'ning rod,
 Exulting cry, Where's now thy God?

Thy judgments, Lord, around my head
 In deep'ning shades of terror spread,
 Affright me with their awful forms,
 And vex my soul with all thy storms:
 Responsive to the billows' roar
 Their wrath succeeding billows pour.

Chasing with wild terrific noise
 All but the memory of my joys—
 Those joys that once thy servant knew.
 When to thy sacred courts he drew
 The willing throng, and bade them raise
 Their mingled voice in songs of praise.

Yet while on these delights I dwell,
 Returning hopes my bosom swell:
 And why, I ask, does thy controul,
 O faithless fear, subdue my soul,
 That thus disquieted I mourn?
 Hath God forgotten to return?
 He is my Rock—and though my foes
 Their impious railings still oppose,
 And still, as falls the chast'ning rod,
 Exulting cry, Where's now thy God?
 Yet through my day will He prolong
 His mercy, and inspire my song!

God of my life! to Thee I owe
 My willing pray'r, my faithful vow!
 Whether o'er Jordan's stream I bend,
 Or Hermon's weary height ascend,
 There will I still remember Thee,
 In whom my stedfast trust shall be;
 And Thou shalt claim my future praise,
 Whilst Thy deliverance crowns my days!

R. B. E.

ERRATA.

- Page 23, line 4 of the Commentary, for *we can suppose*, read *we can presume*.
,, 97, for *Ver. 9—16*, read *Ver. 9—15*.
,, 98, line 6, for *off*, read *of*.
,, 111, line 13, for *resurrection*, read *the resurrection*.
,, 120, line 9, for *hath*, read *hast*.
,, 165, 6th line from the bottom, for *or against*, read *for against*.
,, 240, line 12 of the Commentary, read *forefathers* (plural.)

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